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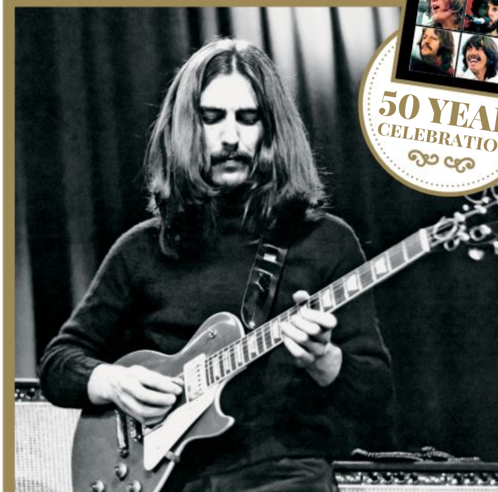
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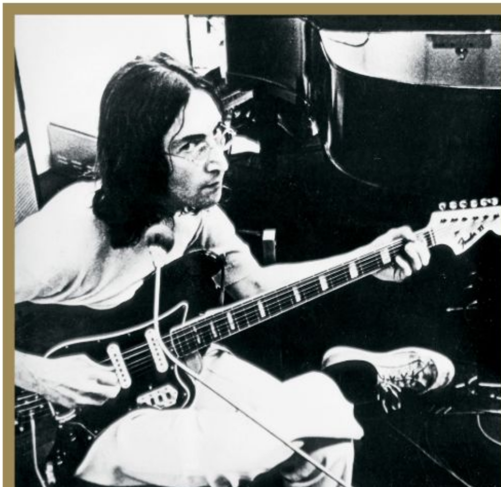
THE BEATLES

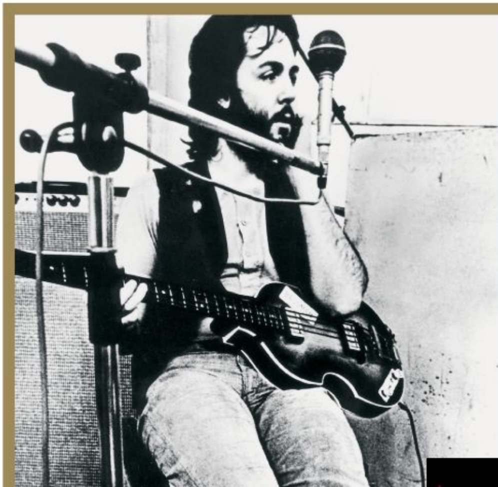
LET IT BE

The guitars and gear behind their return to rock & roll



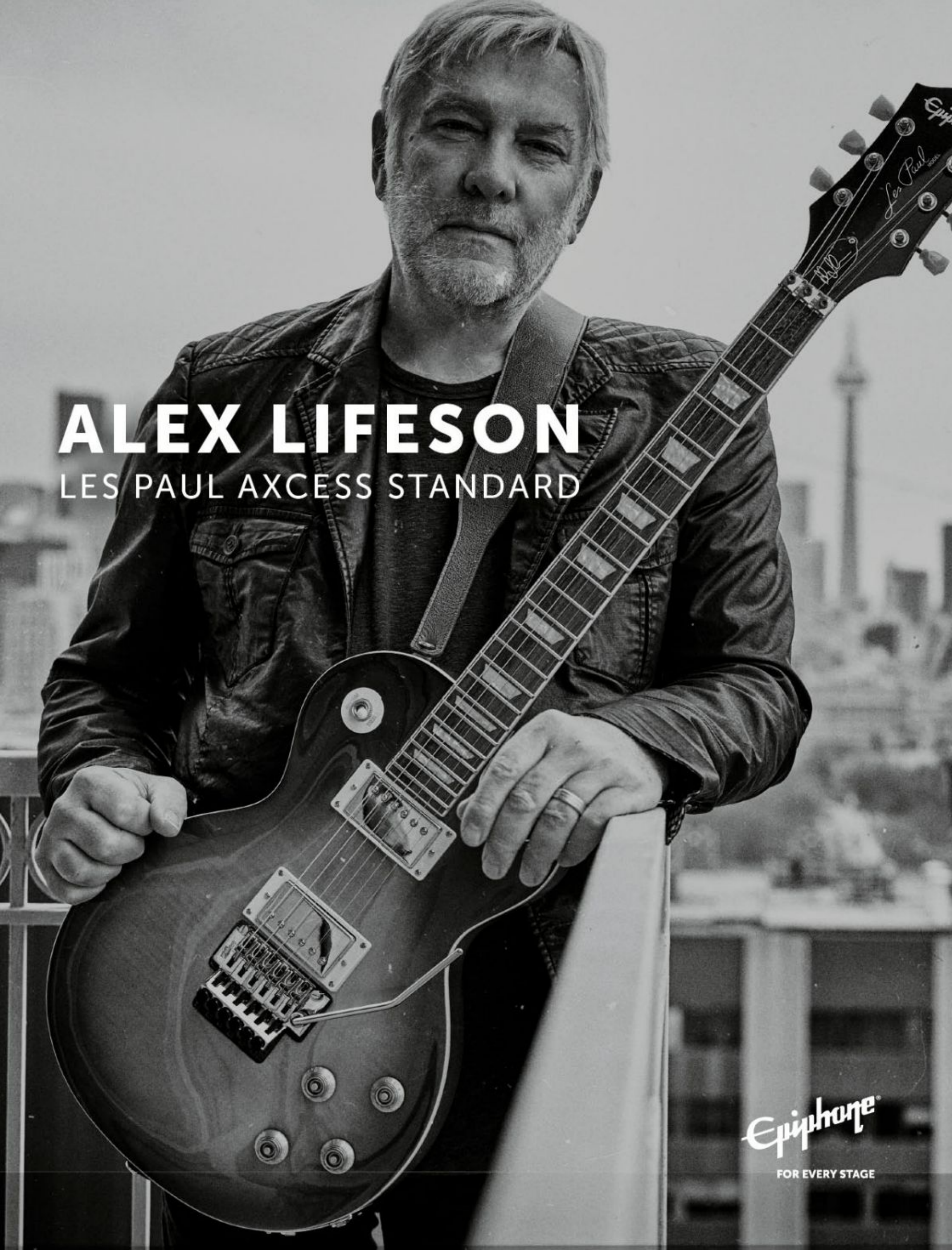
50 YEAR CELEBRATION



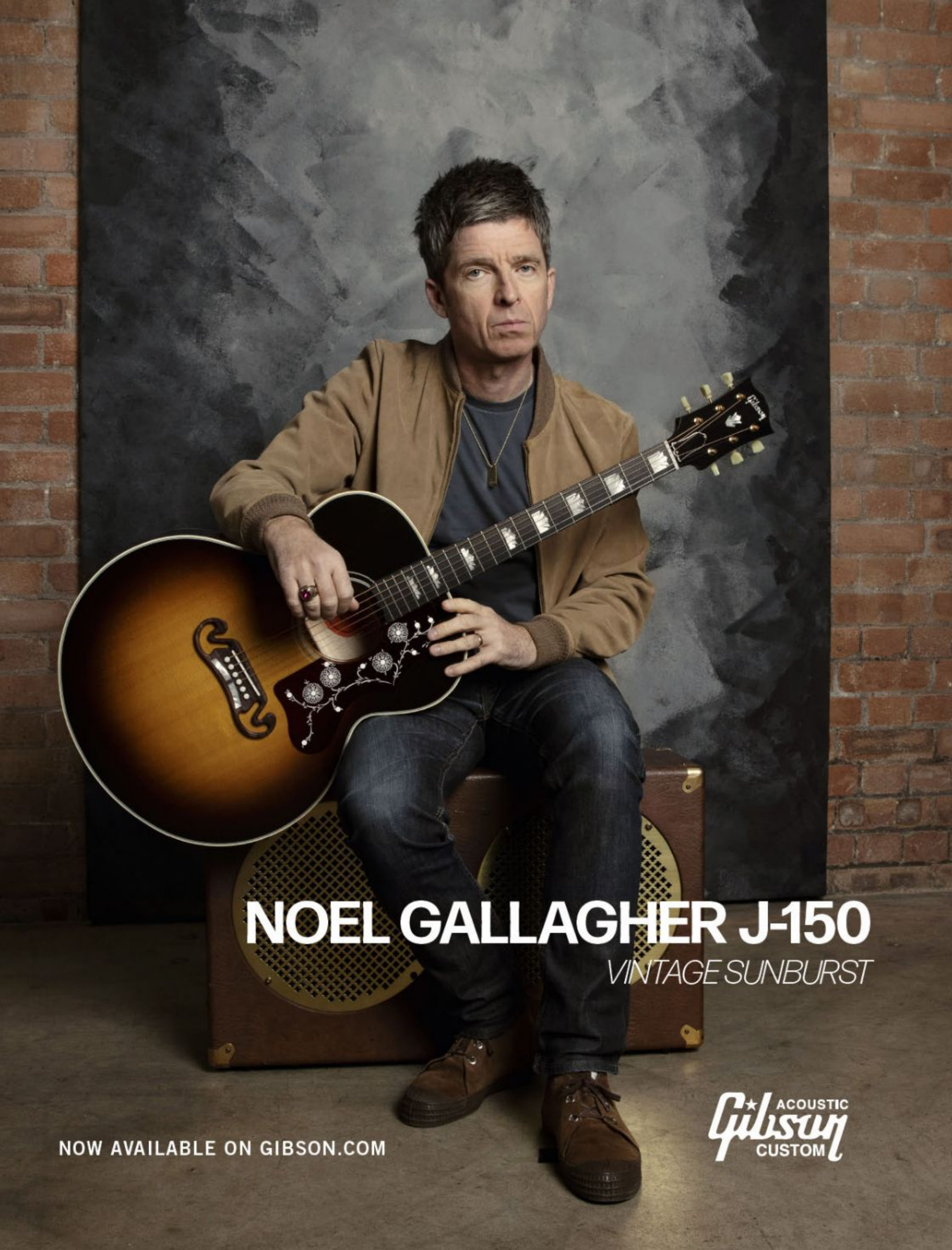


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LET IT BEATLES

THERE ARE MANY ways to approach the Beatles' career: album by album, era by era, haircut by haircut. But the group's choices of guitars and other gear is an especially enjoyable and revealing method for examining the development of their music and sounds. The period beginning in 1968 is particularly interesting, as it was then that some great new guitars and amps entered the picture during the making of the White Album. Come January 1969 and the recording of *Let It Be*, their gear lineup expanded with the addition of several pieces from Fender, including the company's then-new silverface amps, which make a such a pleasing sight in the previews for director Peter Jackson's new documentary, *The Beatles: Get Back*. This issue, we take a look at that gear and the history behind it.

Coincidentally, this August marks the 50th anniversary of another Beatles-related event: George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh, the celebrated August 1971 benefit show that became the first of its kind in the world of rock and roll. Recognizing that little research has been done into the guitars used for that event, writer Nikki O'Neill did some sleuthing to uncover not only details about the gear but also to get first-hand stories from Peter Frampton and Badfinger guitarist Joey Molland about the concert and how two of its most famous performers almost didn't show up. We hope this gear extravaganza will hold you over while waiting for the release of *The Beatles: Get Back*, now slated for release in November. Incidentally, anyone seeking more Beatles reading should check out *Fab Fools* by our own production editor, Jem Roberts, in which he explores the group's adventures in comedy, from their classic films to cartoons and pantomime.

I hope you're having a great summer. Enjoy the issue.

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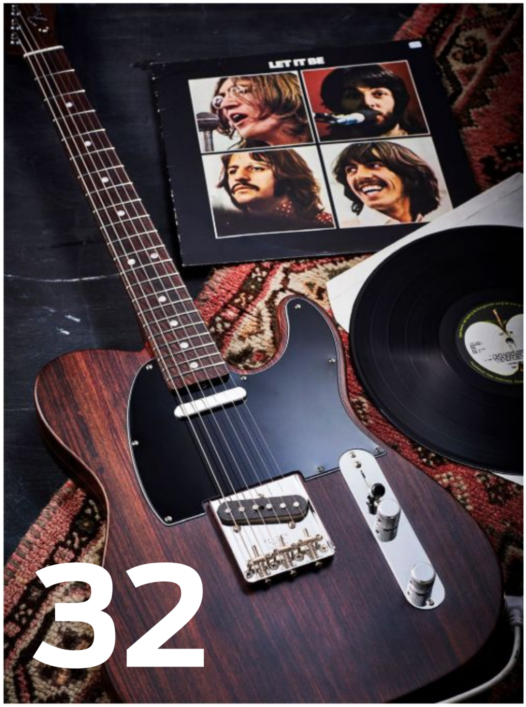
NEW & COOL

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BETTMAN/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON); CLAYTON CALL/REDFERNS (GORDON AND GATTON); DIANE RICHTER (DUGAN); OLLY CURTIS (TELECASTER)

ON THE COVER
John Lennon, Paul McCartney and **George Harrison**, January 1969
Getty Images

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GEAR



HOW I WROTE...



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MORE PAUL

Jon Sullivan's '71 Trella takes the classic single-cutaway set-neck design to new lengths.

BY TOM BEAUJOUR

IN HIS CAREER as a guitar builder, Jon Sullivan has likely agonized over a myriad of decisions regarding the form and function of his eye-catching instruments, but what to call them was never up for debate. "I got my first electric guitar in 1983, when I was 12," he recalls. "It was a Maxitone, from the Matsumoku factory in Japan, that was a very '60s, *Jetsons*-like bastardization of a Strat. I was very excited about it, and I took a Sharpie and signed 'Sully' on the headstock. So it was always going to be a thing."

Like many guitar-obsessed teens who came of age in the '80s, Sullivan, who grew up in Lombard, Illinois, spent his teenage years learning the licks of hard-rock icons such as Ace Frehley, Eddie Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, and Ratt's Warren DeMartini and Robbin Crosby. He was influenced by not only their playing but also their choice in instruments. "I was attracted to the newer, flashier, more modern guitars they played, like Robbin's Jackson King V, and guitars built from various parts, like Ed's Frankenstein," Sullivan says. "I didn't care about Fender Strats." When he wasn't practicing, Sullivan pored over the ads for guitar parts, necks and bodies in the back pages of guitar magazines, and studied the catalogs he received from luthiery supply house Stewart-McDonald. "And then I would also hang out like a stray cat at my local music store, Park Ave Guitarz. They were Jackson dealers, so they had all kinds of cool custom-shop stuff, and the owner, Steve Harnack, was just so nice to me. I would watch him do repairs and build parts guitars for all of the guys in town, and just ask questions."

In 1990, Sullivan, like so many ambitious hard rockers of the time, moved to Los Angeles with his band to seek fame and fortune on the Sunset Strip. Things did not go exactly as planned. "I came back to the Chicago area about two weeks before the L.A. riots in '92 with my newborn son, and then a year later I became a single parent with custody," he explains. "So there were a lot of day jobs working in record stores and the like, and then getting a corporate gig. But I always played." Around 2001, Sullivan also began buying parts, building guitars and posting photos of his builds on the web. "I found the Jackson and Charvel internet forum and through there started making connections," he says. "People would see the guitars I had made and be like, 'Dude, that looks rad! Can you build me one like that?' That was huge for



The bound mahogany body wears a dazzling Glamazon Gold Over Honeyburst finish.



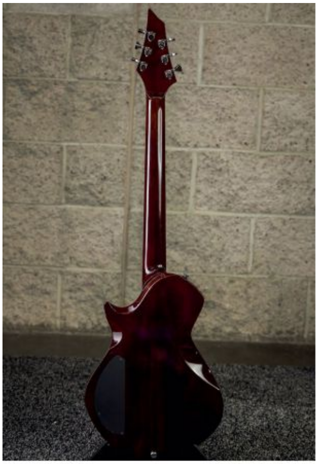
Sully in the workshop.

me. And from there I progressed to building guitars from scratch. I finally quit my day job in 2014."

In the seven years since taking the plunge into full-time guitar building, Sullivan, who worked out of his garage until recently moving to a new shop facility in Aubrey, Texas, has built custom guitars for the likes of Mötley Crüe's Nikki Sixx, Buckcherry's Stevie D. and Stryper's Michael Sweet, with whom he has also developed a signature model. And while many of the guitars in the Sully lineup — like the asymmetric V-shaped Concorde and the Firebird-inspired Raven — nod to some of the "pointy guitars" that he grew up admiring, Sullivan is quick to point out that his goal is not to re-create the guitars of the '80s but to reconnect people with the mindset that made the era so colorful and fun. "Look, we're all a product of our influences to varying degrees, but I'm not looking to relive the '80s," he says. "That said, it was an era in which rock stars were pretty much superheroes, and I hope to grant people permission to have a little fun and maybe tap into that. People will see a pink, sparkly guitar that I've made and say, 'Oh man, I love that guitar, but I could never pull it off.' And I'm like, 'Of course you can! You just have to decide that you can.'"

For Sullivan, however, the more traditional, single-cutaway '71 Trella is the guitar in the Sully line that most closely reflects his personal aesthetic. The model's name combines his birth year with his mother-in-law's nickname. "If I could make just one model, it would be the '71," he says. "It's really a guitar that came from dissatisfaction. I always wanted a good Les Paul, and I owned several of them that were all well-made guitars and were perfectly fine, but I never kept any of them. And I finally had the realization that I simply don't like guitars with the shorter, 24.75-inch scale length. So I decided to create a single-cutaway set-neck guitar with a 25.5-inch scale that would satisfy my desire and would also be very much my own. I spent four years on that design. I would just draw and draw and draw."

It was time well spent. The '71 Trella that we received for consideration shares a certain DNA with the Gibson Les Paul, but it is clearly a distinct species of its own. The bound mahogany body's upper bout features an almost triangular hump, while the guitar's butt curves steeply down to a pointy, mildly demonic tail. All the controls — a three-way toggle switch, a volume knob and a push-pull tone knob that splits both proprietary Sully Al Pastor pickups to single-coil operation — reside on the guitar's lower bout. An aluminum wraparound Pigtail bridge leaves much of the guitar's subtly flamed one-piece maple top visible, which is a good thing, as you wouldn't want to obscure any more of the sparkling Glamazon Gold Over Honeyburst finish than necessary. The two-piece, relatively slim mahogany neck features a hand-shaped volute, a rosewood fingerboard with a compound 12- to 16-inch radius, meticulously finished nickel frets and Sully's signature "Hollow Block" inlays. The neck is sleek and comfortable, requiring little if no periodic adjustment, while the Trella's tidy neck joint provides unfettered access to all 22 frets.







Even unplugged, the '71 Trella feels resonant and alive. Run through a vintage Marshall Super Lead and low-wattage Three Monkeys Sock Monkey, the guitar immediately proves the merits of marrying a single-cutaway, two-humbucker design with the longer 25.5-inch scale. There's a slight percussive knock, a solidity and a rapidity of response that you won't find in many guitars of this ilk with shorter scales, and thanks to the straight string-travel path from the nut to the Hipshot locking tuners on the three-on-a-side Aero headstock, this is a guitar that stays

"IT'S REALLY A GUITAR THAT CAME FROM DISSATISFACTION. I SPENT FOUR YEARS ON THAT DESIGN"

in tune astoundingly well. The Al Pastor pickups, which are wound to vintage-output specs, are also a revelation, providing the clarity and responsiveness you'd expect, with enough midrange girth to render them ideally suited for most rock and hard-rock applications. And whereas many humbuckers produce an anemic "neither fish nor fowl" clank when split for single-coil operation, these sound open, articulate and full. All that said, be cautioned: While a hard-shell case is included in the purchase price, you'll have to bring your own superhero cape to the party.

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ZACH PIGG

KARMA CHAMELEON

Aaron Lee Tasjan's psychedelic guitar-pop visions lead him down the path of life's surprises.

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

HOW AARON LEE TASJAN spent his lone semester at the Berklee College of Music says a lot about his interests as a guitar player. After winning a scholarship through a high school jazz band competition, he largely put off attending class, preferring to hole up in his room and listen to Wilco's experimental-pop classic *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* on repeat.

"Berklee was really eye-opening in a lot of ways," he recalls. "Just sitting in the room with some of the other kids that were warming up, I thought, I'm probably not going to be a jazz guitar player for a living any time soon if this is the competition. At the time, I was really hungry to play gigs. I had a lot of hot air in my head and I just wanted to get on with life."

He blew off academia and took his six-string vision to New York City, where he helped form the avant-garde rock group Semi Precious Weapons, whose opening act was often a pre-stardom Lady Gaga. Tasjan also played sideman to a succession of established artists, including Sean Lennon, the New York Dolls and Drivin N Cryin, before moving to Nashville to begin a solo career.

Tasjan has a reputation as a chameleonic musician, sliding easily from the Doug Sahm and John Prine songwriting sensibilities of his early releases, *In the Blazes* and *Silver Tears*, to the warped psychedelic rock and pop of 2018's *Karma for Cheap*. On his latest album, *Tasjan! Tasjan! Tasjan!* (New West), he jangles six- and 12-string electrics into Tom Petty and George Harrison territory on songs like "Up All Night" and "Sunday Women," refracted through a lens as mind bending as the tinted frames he often wears onstage.

> **"I FEEL LIKE THE BEST STUFF HAPPENS ACCIDENTALLY. YOU DON'T QUITE KNOW HOW YOU GOT THERE"**

His eclectic musical tastes carry over to his custom-made guitars, too. His go-to axes are a trio of Southside electric mashups built by Tom Gauldin in Birmingham, Alabama, including a Firebird-style six-string with a Bigsby tremolo, a Tele neck and a humbucker/single-coil pickup configuration. His main 12-string electric was made by Scott Gorsuch of Gorsuch Guitars in Columbus, Ohio.

Compared to your earlier albums, it sounds like you went gear crazy on *Tasjan! Tasjan! Tasjan!*

I suppose that's fair. I have always been a fan of that psychedelic sound that the Beatles developed and went crazy with. Also,



TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

Radiohead's *OK Computer* was a big record for me, and so was *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. I've always been interested in music that has those sonic embellishments. What I also noticed about those records is that the effects might be amazing and thrilling to listen to on headphones, but you can play those songs on an acoustic guitar around a campfire and everybody will want to sing along. I thought that if I can keep a classic feel to the songs, then I can do some of these wilder things sonically, something that makes it more exciting to listen to, hopefully. That was the goal.

How did you carry out that vision?
I wanted to create guitar sounds that didn't sound like guitars. On "Up All Night," for example, a lot of the stuff that sounds like synthesizers is actually guitars. I did that with the guitar's tone knob and pickup selectors and my effects, including the Electro-Harmonix Synth9, which I used on that. I also have the Strymon Deco pedal, which emulates tape saturation, delay and flange. I would blend those with the guitar and then roll enough of the tone off so you couldn't hear the character of the pick hitting the strings. It sounded more round and mellow. That allowed me to get these sounds that were more like synthesizers. If you soloed the track, you could tell it was a guitar, but in the track it does have a bit of mystery to it. I'm always trying to seek out musical situations that feel that way.

Had you used a 12-string electric before this record?
Not in the way that I did on this album. Almost every song on this record has electric 12-string. I just love how you can use it like an orchestra. I think 12-string feels especially musical to me. I don't always strum it; I love to pick it and solo on it and bend the notes and get weird overtones out of it. It feels adventurous.

There's a Traveling Wilburys, Jeff Lynne/Tom Petty feel to the songs on the new album that lends itself to a 12-string setup.
When I was a kid, I used to fall asleep every night with a pair on headphones on, and nine times out of 10, the CD was Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' *Greatest Hits* — the one that had the Thunderclap Newman cover of "Something in the Air" and "Mary Jane's Last Dance." I loved all the eras represented on it, and it's really well sequenced.

The first thing I got into musically was the Beatles. That branched off to other music of that era that my parents loved, which would have been the Byrds. I would have heard 12-string stuff there for sure. By the time I had gotten into Tom Petty, the needle was really deep. There were so many cool things coming out that had that vibe along the way, too. Pete Droge, to me, was the coolest thing since Elvis. The Pretenders were another big one for me. Those jangly 12-string guitars are a part of their thing, too.



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Tasjan! Tasjan! Tasjan!
"Up All Night," "Now You Know," "Not That Bad," "Computer of Love," "Another Lonely Day"

You use hand-wired amps these days. What do you like in amplification?
I wanted something that could be versatile, because sometimes I'm playing 12-string electric but sometimes I'm still playing six-string stuff, and I want that to have a different attack and feel. I've come up with a scenario where I basically A/B between a Tweed Deluxe and a Fender Princeton that I had my friend rewire so it runs a little louder than Princetons normally do. There's not necessarily more headroom, because when I'm playing the 12-string I do keep it pretty clean — pretty much straight and direct guitar and amp.

The Tweed Deluxe is one of the newer Fender hand-wired models. The one I have is an Edge signature, so the low end is a little tighter than normal. There's just nothing like it for rock and roll. I also like to play my acoustic guitar through my fuzz or overdrive pedals and into the P.A. It just pulverizes the sound. It's like J. Mascis in Dinosaur Jr. Everything is set to stun, and you can see the people in the front row get their hair blown back.

I've read interviews where you've said that your guitar playing can be "unreasonable." What do you mean by that? Does that come out in your performances?
I think so. I feel like the best stuff happens accidentally. You don't quite know how you got there. One time I was playing this festival, and the last song ended with a long guitar solo, and the band just kept going, and we got kind of Crazy Horse with it for a minute. The end of the solo just started getting completely insane. I didn't even know how I was doing it or what was happening. I was sober, so it wasn't like a hallucinogenic thing. I was just in the zone and enjoying the music.

We finished the set and someone was like, "That was amazing at the end. How did you do that?" I had no idea. Then I walked over to the side of the stage to move some of my gear off and I saw that the sun had shifted during our set and moved over the top of my tape echo machine and melted the tape. All of this crazy, wacky insanity that was coming out of my guitar was just the sun melting the tape in my tape echo machine. I was like, "Yes!" That's the most ideal scenario you could possibly hope for, that when it melts it's in front of people and during a guitar solo. You really couldn't hope for anything better than that.



THE FEEL'S THE THING

As a guitarist of many influences, Marcus Machado puts the "extra" into his sensory perception.

BY JOE BOSSO

WHEN HE WAS 16, an age when most guitarists are still dreaming of playing their first high-school dances, Marcus Machado got a call to perform the National Anthem at an Orlando Magic NBA game before a sell-out crowd of 20,000. "I should have been nervous, but the truth is, I was elated," he says with a laugh "The crowd actually helped me perform. Practicing in my bedroom, I had always imagined what it would be like playing to an arena full of people, so when I heard them cheering for me, it wasn't scary at all. It was pretty magical."

In the years since his arena debut, Machado would be called to perform the National Anthem a few more times. One such appearance was at Madison Square Garden before a New York Knicks game. "It's always an honor when you get asked to play the song," he says. "It's a heavy piece of music, and it's been done by legends, but I don't want to imitate. There was only one Hendrix, one Stevie Ray Vaughan. I've always tried to try to put my own flavor into it and enjoy the moment. Let the song tell its story, but put some of your story into it, too."

"YOU CAN LEARN TO PLAY JIMMY PAGE OR HENDRIX SOLOS, BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE FEELING? THAT'S WHAT I'VE TRIED TO TAP INTO"

Machado's guitar style is a fascinating amalgam of influences. He picked up the guitar at the age of two and absorbed the music of his parents (his mother loved jazz, while his father favored rock) before discovering blues, funk, soul and hip-hop. "Hendrix and Jimi Hazel were two biggies for me," he says. "They seemed to be able to take everything and turn it into their own sound." After a lengthy period of performing as a sideman for artists like the Family Stand and Weather Report's Victor Bailey, he released his debut EP, *29*, in 2015, to rousing acclaim.

In the following years, Machado worked with pianist/producer Robert Glasper, and rappers Anderson .Paak and Pete Rock. He also contributed to scores for documentaries such as *Contact High* and the Emmy-winning *The Apollo*, and he joined Living Colour bassist Doug Wimbish and Jack White drummer Daru Jones for the "soul-hop" project DMD the Vibes. More recently, Machado formed a hip-hop/doomsday metal trio called th1rt3en with Jones and rap legend Pharoahe Monch

ROGER ADAM MAYER

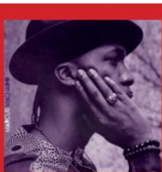
(their debut album, *A Magnificent Day for an Exorcism*, is a scorcher), and he's just released his full-length follow-up to *29* called *Aquarius Purple* (Soul Step Records), which neatly folds rock, jazz, soul and hip-hop into one thoroughly transporting set.

"It took me a while to put *Aquarius Purple* together," he says, "but I think it really shows where I'm at. The album is like a tribute to my guitar gods — Prince, Eddie Hazel, Jimi, Stevie Ray Vaughan. I don't try to sound like them, but I feel them. I'm super proud of how it turned out."

You've mentioned a lot of the guitarists you've studied, but how did you go beyond emulation into forming your own style?
Not to sound redundant, but it's all about feeling. I put in the hours and I've listened to so many players. I played their solos and riffs. I learned the scales and all that, played all the crazy-fast stuff. You can learn to play Jimmy Page or Hendrix solos, but what about what they were feeling? That's what I've tried to tap into. Whether it was rock or jazz, or even listening to hip-hop or whatever, I thought about the stories these people were telling. It goes beyond soloing and technical stuff.

One weird thing about me is I'm ambidextrous. I'm a right-hand player, but I can play lefty. I'm kind of the reverse of Jimi. One day I just flipped the guitar over and learned how to do everything lefty. I ended up re-learning the whole instrument. It does something to your brain. When I went back to playing right-handed, the chords and scales felt strange, like they were new. So maybe that helps me sound different.

You worked as a sideman for a time before turning solo. What was the biggest thing you learned playing for other artists?
How to play with other people, basically. You can play in your bedroom for years, but that doesn't prepare you for working with other artists. Somebody says, "Take a solo," and you have to be ready. You can't think about it. I also learned what recording in a studio was like. There's a lot of waiting around.



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Aquarius Purple
"Black Psychedelic Funk," "Shape Shift," "Tomorrow Never Knows," "Her"

A lot of tracks on *Aquarius Purple* have a '70s vibe — one definitely hears some Curtis Mayfield — but you also have some triple-harmonized leads that sound very current.
Definitely. I love harmonized guitars and how they can sound like a choir. I approach leads like they're vocals, so I try to blend tones like they're singers. I love new technology, so I use it to the fullest. And yeah, there's a '70s vibe. I like to mix things up. I try to take a hip-hop or a soul beat, put in some Jamerson-type bass, but then I sprinkle bits of blues and rock. Again, that's what I'm going for — mood.

You're a big D'Angelico man.
I play a D'Angelico Bedford SH, for sure. For years I played a Strat because of Hendrix and Eddie Hazel, but now I love D'Angelicos. I wanted to find a guitar that can bring the Fender and Gibson together. D'Angelico does that for me. Put that through a Fender Twin and I'm cool. I also have to give a shout-out to Tech 21 — that [*Hot-Rod*] Plexi pedal gets great distortion.

You certainly crank up the distortion on *A Magnificent Day for an Exorcism*. That's some angry death-metal riffology.
Absolutely. That comes from listening to Black Sabbath, Bad Brains, Megadeth, Band of Gypsys and Led Zeppelin. Pharoahe Monch is one of my top favorite lyricists. It was cool working with him and Daru Jones. The trio is an interesting combination to work with, because typically a trio consists of guitar, bass and drums, but this one is vocals, drums and guitar.

My approach to was to play guitar and bass, working with an octave pedal tuned way down low. I used a Beetronics OctaHive pedal, and then I'm also using a Fuzz Face and a Boss delay. It's pretty simple. Throw that through a big Marshall JCM800 turned up to 10, and that's it. I found a way to make it rock, but I let the hip-hop side come out, too. It's metal, but it's not satanic or anything. It's about the wickedness and evil in this country that we need to cleanse.

Listening to *Aquarius Purple* and the th1rt3en album, one might think they were hearing two different guitarists.
Well, see, that's cool. [*laughs*] No, it's the same guy. On my own record, I set the mood and the vibe, so I could be more relaxed in the way I play. With th1rt3en, it's pretty furious. We're pumped, man. There's so much energy that we all put into that playing style, and it takes a lot out of us. If we go out on tour, we're going to need a trainer.



AL PEREIRA/GETTY IMAGES



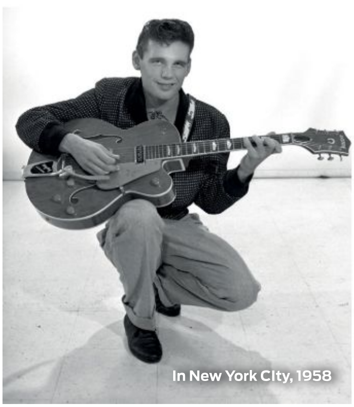
Duane Eddy with his Gretsch G6120DE signature guitar

MY CAREER IN FIVE SONGS

His twangy guitar has helped **Duane Eddy** travel across decades and genres. These are the top cuts from his long-running journey.

BY MARK McSTEA

DUANE EDDY HAS something only the greatest guitarists can claim: an instantly identifiable sound. The word *twangy* was coined to brand his sonic signature way back in the 1950s, and the tag has stuck ever since, thanks to its repetition in album titles like *Have 'Twangy' Guitar Will Travel* and *The 'Twang's' the 'Thang.'* Remarkably, a record company executive rejected his first single for "sounding like somebody trying to string telephone wire across the Grand Canyon" — which is a pretty cool description of Eddy's magic. Awarded *Guitar Player*'s Legend award in 2004, Eddy was just the second recipient of the prize, beaten only by Les Paul the previous year. In the years before and since, he's enjoyed no shortage of justly deserved accolades. With one of the longest careers in rock and roll, Duane Eddy is a living legend.



In New York City, 1958

Since scoring his first hit back in 1958 with "Movin' 'n' Groovin'," Eddy has chalked up numerous successes in the intervening 62 years, with no sign of slowing down. Bringing things right up to date, he got considerable airplay in 2020 with "Mendocino," Jeremy Feltzer's evocative spaghetti-western-flavored instrumental, which spotlights the inimitable sounds of his Gretsch 6120. Eddy has a solid global fan base and regularly tours the world; his U.K.-based fan club, the Duane Eddy Circle, has been running since the '70s and still holds an annual convention. Eddy has had periods when chart success eluded him as trends changed, but the mark of a true artist is the ability to maintain the thing that makes them special, regardless of favor and fashion.

For Eddy, continuing to do what he does best has brought collaborations with a vast array of artists and self-confessed fans, including Paul McCartney, John Fogerty and Jeff Lynne. He has his own theory about how he's maintained such a long-running career. "I think it's important to be prepared to take a chance and do something oddball or off the wall," he says. "My hit with Art of Noise in the '80s [*a remake of his his signature tune "Peter Gunn"*] was a good example of that. I've played on some unlikely things over the years, such as 'Rock and Roll Lullabye' with B.J. Thomas. I even played music behind a cowboy poet once while he recited his poetry at rodeos. You have to be unafraid. Fear not and forward blunder!"

Anyone who's seen Eddy onstage in recent years will know that he is still delivering the goods and never tires of playing those timeless classics. "There was a period, a long time ago, when I got bored and couldn't think of any fresh ideas," he admits, "but I worked my way through that and got myself on track again. I've been very lucky, I think. I didn't have anything else that I could do anyway, except maybe mow a lawn." He laughs. "I tried producing and publishing and neither one was satisfying, so I went back to being an artist."

"MOVIN' 'N' GROOVIN'" DUANE EDDY, *HAVE TWANGY GUITAR WILL TRAVEL* (1958)

"As one review said, I burst upon the scene with 'Movin' 'n' Groovin'.' A big part of the song is based on the use of the Bigsby on my Gretsch. That kind of established my signature sound. I'd been playing a Les Paul, but I knew I really wanted a guitar with a vibrato arm. I traded the Les Paul in for a Gretsch 6120 at Ziggy's music store. I knew

JESSE WILD (TOP); POPSIE RANDOLPH/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (THIS PAGE)



right away that it was what I wanted. It had the best neck I'd ever played. Everybody who ever tried it — from Buddy Holly, Merle Travis, Chet Atkins through to Larry Carlton — has commented on that neck. I was in England in 1960 at the same time as Eddie Cochran, not long before he died in the car crash, and we tried each other's guitars. He had a real nice neck on his, but he said to me, 'I think the neck on yours might just be better than mine.' If you buy a Duane Eddy model today from Gretsch, it has that same neck shape.

"That 6120 of mine is at the Musical Instrument Museum in Scottsdale, Arizona. As I'm from Phoenix, they wanted to borrow it and put it on display there. They've even reconstructed the old studio where we recorded 'Movin'.' The engineer, Jack Miller, donated his old equipment, and it's set up just like we had it. I guess that must be one of the most iconic guitars from the rock and roll era."

"THREE-30 BLUES"
DUANE EDDY, *HAVE 'TWANGY' GUITAR WILL TRAVEL* (1958)

"I'd seen some people play blues by the time I wrote this song, and I thought it would be a nice addition to the record. We could do whatever we wanted on an album for six or seven tracks. We'd put a couple on that we thought might be hits, like 'Peter Gunn,' which started out as an album track but became a hit because somebody pulled it off the record to release as a single. I wanted to do something different. I didn't want to play what I'd already played. I had my first fight with Lee Hazelwood, my producer, over that. He wanted to release another track as a single, and I said no, because I thought it was too similar to 'Rebel Rouser.' I said it'd be the death of me. He didn't understand it at first, but he thought about it and said, 'You could be right.' I met B.B. King not long after 'Three-30 Blues' was released, and he told me that he really liked it, so that was a fantastic seal of approval.

"I TRADED THE LES PAUL IN FOR A GRETSCH 6120. IT HAD THE BEST NECK I'D EVER PLAYED"

"Over the years, some people have suggested the song was influenced by [*Bill Doggett's*] 'Honky Tonk' and that kind of structured blues instrumental, but I don't think it is anything like it in terms of feel or tempo. It never occurred to me when I was writing it. I actually did record 'Honky Tonk' later on for RCA, and it's a great track."



"DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALRIGHT"
DUANE EDDY, *DUANE DOES DYLAN* (1965)

"This was the first Dylan song that I attempted, and I liked the way it turned out so much that it made me think I could do more like it. This is my favorite track on that album. I really liked Bob's songs, so we picked seven that seemed to work real well and added a few by other artists that were in the same vein, like 'Eve of Destruction' [*written by P.F. Sloan and made famous by Barry McGuire*]. I realized that I'd got enough to put an album together, and then Lee suggested the album title. The guitar sound on this was a little different from my usual tone. The big thing in those days was the fuzz tone. I used that on most of the songs because that was what was happening on a lot of records, and I think it helped to make it sound a bit more contemporary.

"When I was working on the songs, I was actively looking for ways to arrange them to incorporate low open strings, to really capitalize on the Bigsby. This track was recorded with the 6120. I think I used the Dano six-string bass on a number of the other songs on the album. When I'm arranging, I try to be aware of using as many different keys as I can and utilize open strings. It helps keep it sounding like me, but of course there are limits to what keys you can effectively use and still make those low open strings work."

"PETER GUNN"
DUANE EDDY, *ESPECIALLY FOR YOU* (1959)

"This was written by Henry Mancini and was originally a theme tune for the TV series of the same name. I guess it's possible that he may have been influenced by my sound for the main riff. I met him after I'd had my hit with it, although I didn't realize it was him at first. He ran up to me and said, 'Hi, I'm Hank Mancini. Thank you for doing 'Peter Gunn.' You've made a lot of money for me!' [*laughs*] That was one of those moments in life that you cherish.



"When we were recording the album, we were looking around for a final song when Steve Douglas, who played sax with me, suggested 'Peter Gunn.' I think he really wanted it out there because it was a great showcase for his playing and would help boost his profile. I thought that there wasn't really anything for me to do on it besides play that riff repeatedly, so I couldn't see it working. Then I came up with the idea of playing the low open E with the Bigsby depressed a half step before the band kicked in, and I guess that gave it something of my signature. When we recorded it, something went wrong with the equipment and we couldn't remix anything, but it sounded perfect the way that it was. I guess it mixed itself. Fast forward 25 years later and U.K. dance act Art of Noise asked me to play on their version, and it was a hit all over again. We were about as far apart as we could be in genres, but I think my sound can work against anything, and that was a great example."

"MENDOCINO"
JEREMY FETZER, *JEREMY FETZER* (2020)

"I already knew Jeremy from about five years before we recorded together. He has a band called Steelism, with a really great steel player from England named Spencer Cullum. He got my email address from Charlie McCoy, the harp player, and when he sent the email to me, Jeremy implied the email was from Charlie, as he thought I might not recognize his name and just disregard it. That worked, and he sent me a rough mix of the track with a piano outlining the main theme. I reproduced that part and added some of my own ideas for fills. I'd call Jeremy up and sing some of the melody lines over the phone, so he knew what I had in mind. Between us, we worked the rest out in the studio. It turned out great. His playing on there is just fantastic. It's a very atmospheric piece of music. It has been getting a lot of radio play, which I guess was a little unexpected, but it's nice to still be on the radio over 60 years after my first hit. I've been working on some new material of my own as well recently, so hopefully that will do as well as 'Mendocino' when it gets released."



At the 12th Annual Americana Music Honors and Awards, September 18, 2013

MICHAEL LEVIN/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS (TOP); FREDERICK BREEDON/GETTY IMAGES (2013)


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Lennon's original Rickenbacker 325, which he purchased in Hamburg in 1960

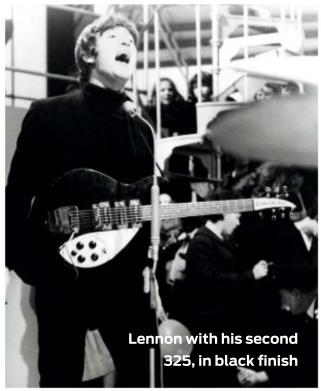
Rick and Roll Music

John Lennon's discovery of the Rickenbacker 325 launched the guitar maker's Invasion-era success.

RICKENBACKER'S EXPLOSION IN popularity in the 1960s came courtesy of an unlikely and convoluted combination of circumstances: a British band selling a U.S.-made guitar back to the American audience, all thanks to an admittedly oddball model originally purchased in Germany. But while anything the Beatles laid their hands on made for an easy ride in the marketing department, the Rickenbacker 325 and its brethren proved to have a lot going for them in their own right.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Rickenbacker was born in the late '50s or early '60s, given the way its guitars hit the scene with John Lennon and George Harrison of the Beatles, the Byrds' Roger McGuinn and the Who's Pete Townshend, among others. In fact, this manufacturer's origins extend back to the very dawn of the electric guitar. Rickenbacker evolved from a team of inventors and manufacturers who originally worked together at National in the 1920s, trying to make guitars louder using resonator cones, before amplification became the obvious way forward. They included George Beauchamp and Paul Barth, who in 1931 developed what is widely considered the first successful magnetic pickup for guitar. With help from Harry Watson and Adolph Rickenbacker, they put this "horseshoe pickup" — so called for its U-shaped magnets — on a rudimentary maple solidbody guitar. Dubbed the "frying pan" for its shape, this was the first of a line of solid Spanish and Hawaiian guitars made from both wood and Bakelite that would carry the Rickenbacker (and sometimes Rickenbacher) brand name that fronted Beauchamp, Barth and Rickenbacker's Electro String Company.

Ownership went to distributor F.C. Hall in 1954, by which time Rickenbacker was on its way to becoming the jangly propellant of the British Invasion. The big horseshoe pickup still appeared on some of the revamped company's early models, notably the Combo, but over the next few years, some more-conventional single-coil guitars went into



Lennon with his second 325, in black finish

production, and the line was lurching toward what we consider its classic status. By the end of the 1950s, Rickenbacker offered a model range that included hollowbodies, short- and full-scale solids, and semi-solids with one, two and even three pickups.

It was around this time that a young John Lennon was walking the streets of Hamburg, Germany, in search of his dream guitar. For Lennon, Harrison or any young British rock and roller of 1960, the term *quality guitar* was synonymous with *American guitar*. Lennon found his hanging in a Hamburg guitar shop in the form of a natural-finish 1958 Rickenbacker 325, which was part of the company's Capri series (named for the Hall family cat). The 325, like the other models in the series, was designed by German luthier

NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (325); SAMMLUNG HORST FASCHER-K & K/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (LENNON)

BY DAVE HUNTER







Playing his first 325 after it was refinished black, with Paul McCartney, onstage at the Star-Club Hamburg, December 1962

SAMMLUNG HORST FASCHER - K & K/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Roger Rossmeisl. Harrison, who was along for the ride when Lennon bought the guitar, told BBC Radio, "It was a great-looking guitar, and I think in England you had to order them and wait for six months. Not just for Rickenbackers, for anything — Fenders, Gibsons... And I think it [*came about*] purely because John needed a decent guitar and that one happened to be in the shop and he liked the look of it."

This 325 would become the sound of Beatles rhythm guitar from 1960 to around '65, as heard on "All My Loving," "I Saw Her Standing There" and "I Want to Hold Your Hand." By the time it was thrust into the public eye during the band's 1964 debut appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Lennon's 325 had transmuted to a gloss-black finish in 1962, courtesy of an English coachmaker. (A decade later it would be repaired and stripped to natural by New York repairman Ron DeMarino.)

But fans comparing Lennon's early Rickenbacker with even slightly later 325s will notice several other things that stand out about it. For instance, later examples sported an f-hole on the upper bout that revealed the body's semi-hollow nature, though this '58 — an early guitar built in the model's first year of existence — had a solid top that gave it the impression of being a solidbody. A year or two after Lennon's 325 was made, Rickenbacker switched to the characteristic white-plastic pickguard with a raised forward section, rather than the flat white (and later gold) pickguard. In addition, Lennon modified his 325 by swapping its original Kauffman Vibrola for a Bigsby, and changing out the original oven-style knobs for Hofners.

Mods, rare features and refinishes aside, the Rickenbacker 325 was something of an oddball to attain legendary guitar status. Its scale length was a mere 20 ¾ inches, putting it in the student-sized range. As such, it's likely the shortest-scale electric to attain star-guitar fame. Given the limited appeal of these short-scale models, the 325 Capri wasn't setting sales records in the late '50s and likely would have been headed for deletion. After Lennon embraced it, however, it became one of the most desirable of all the now-vintage Rickenbacker guitars.

"JOHN NEEDED A DECENT GUITAR, AND THAT ONE HAPPENED TO BE IN THE SHOP"

Tone-wise, the 325's scale length contributes to a loose, wiry sound, but the key proponent of that Rickenbacker jangle and kerrang is found in its three toaster-top pickups. Although these look somewhat like mini humbuckers, they are actually single-coil units made with a central row of six individual Alnico magnet pole pieces with a coil wound around them. Their sound is appropriately bright and chimey, and has played a big part in Rickenbacker guitars' enduring popularity.

In the wake of the British Invasion, the brand found favor with '70s and '80s stars like Tom Petty and Mike Campbell of the Heartbreakers, Paul Weller, Peter Buck, Dave Gregory, Johnny Marr and many others. Despite the collectability of vintage 325s and Lennon's enduring legacy, relatively few major stars have turned to this short-scale model, although Susanna Hoffs made her mark with one in the Bangles, and a generation earlier John Fogerty used his Fireglo 325 on many Creedence Clearwater Revival recordings and live dates. In the eyes of most players, it remains a classic model from the British Invasion.

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

> Semi-hollow body, with no f-hole
> 20 ¾" scale length
> Glued-in "through-neck" construction (about 50 percent of body length)
> Three single-coil "toaster top" pickups
> Kauffman Vibrola (replaced by Bigsby vibrato on Lennon's first example)

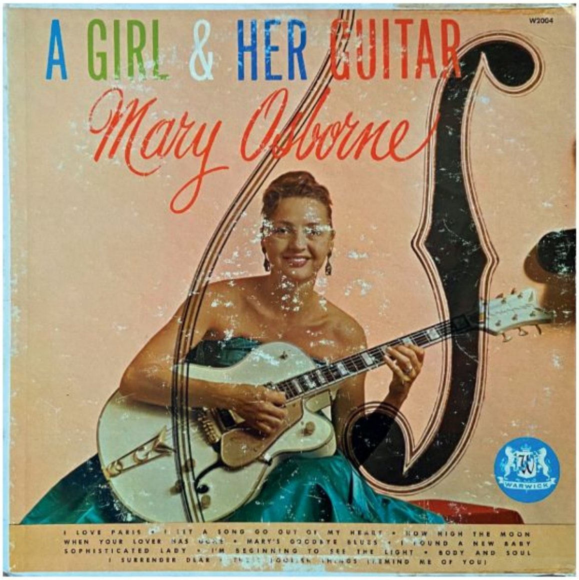
VINYL TREASURES

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Lady Swings the Blues

Mary Osborne is her bad-ass best on *A Girl & Her Guitar*.



WHEN I OPEN a guitar magazine and see a photo of a guitarist with his shirt off, covered in Harley-esque tattoos, showing off his commitment to weightlifting with a guitar strap that places his guitar below his knees, I become uninterested. But when I see an attractive woman in an evening dress holding a jazz guitar like it's an extension of her arms, I become very interested indeed. Mary Osborne was more than a pretty face. She was a great swinging jazz guitarist that every fan of swing guitar should hear.

Born in 1921, Mary began playing guitar at age nine. At some point in her teens, she was influenced by seeing Charlie Christian perform Django's "St. Louis Blues" note for note on electric guitar. She immediately purchased a Gibson ES-150 and started playing lines with a direct, laser-like focus. Her sound is big, as are her statements. She occasionally slips and slides like a playful Les Paul, with a hard-hitting Mickey Baker edge and a Charlie Christian esthetic hovering over it, so don't expect gentle utterances just because one doesn't often see a woman leading a band. Mary Osborne was a bad-ass, and she's at her best on *A Girl and Her Guitar*. Released on the Warwick label in 1960, it features the great pianist Tommy Flanagan, rhythm guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Papa Jo Jones. It's a superb and accomplished band.

"I Love Paris" opens the record with a bang. Papa Jo's rimshots answer Mary's swinging minor-key lines before the band enters, hard as a rock. This track instantly encourages the listener to stick around for more. I can't help thinking of Christian as well as Les Paul on "How High the Moon," but Mary does her own thing. She's bluesy, melodic and powerful. Gotta love Tommy Flanagan's last note of his opening solo line that is perfectly a half-step off from what I expect. Most every time I hear it, I say "Ha!" out loud. "Mary's Goodbye Blues" is another favorite of mine. It's blue and swinging but never departs from a candlelit midnight hour. That's not easy to do, and unless everyone is in the zone, the compulsion to make something happen can prevent anything real from happening at all. Mary and the group succeed beautifully at keeping this performance blue.

MARY'S PLAYING SEEMS EFFORTLESS WHILE SHE PRIORITIZES MELODY OVER ALL ELSE

"I Found a New Baby" shows Mary's technical prowess while she shreds memorable melodic lines that are interspersed with power octaves, and there is another great piano solo by Mr. Flanagan. "Sophisticated Lady" is lovely and introspective, with a memorable chord melody intro. The changes of "Body and Soul" always separate the men from the boys, but Mary's playing seems effortless while she prioritizes melody over all else. Mary is always on point and playing "music." She doesn't show off, and she doesn't play for the guitarist in the front row. She conjures up atmosphere and the truth of the moment. On the intro of "I Surrender Dear," rhythm guitarist Danny Barker complements her playing perfectly before the band enters. Mary surrounded herself with a world-class jazz militia, and every player on this record is a joy to hear. The LP's last cut, "These Foolish Things," feels like I'm sitting by a warm fire after a wonderful day. It closes this excellent record perfectly.

If you haven't heard Mary Osborne, or are just a fan of Charlie Christian–style guitar playing, *A Girl and Her Guitar* is a must-have. It's the kind of record one could transcribe or keep on replay to feel uplifted and energized by its vibe. Mary Osborne is the real deal.

Jim Campilongo has 14 critically acclaimed instrumental records available on vinyl, CD and digital download at jimcampilongo.com.


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LET IT BE

Guitar by Guitar

As **the Beatles'** *Get Back* documentary prepares to head for screens, we look back at the guitars that defined the group's long cold lonely winter of 1969.

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI


LET IT BE

WHEN DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON unveiled the preview of his documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back* this past winter, fans were dazzled by the sight of the Fab Four's smiling faces, and with good reason. The film is a document of the group's notoriously difficult *Let It Be* sessions, a tortuously bleak period in January 1969 when the British group nearly broke apart while attempting to return to the simpler style of music on which they founded their career. Jackson's sneak-preview footage turned the old story on its head, showing the Beatles laughing and clowning with one another in a style not seen since the heady days of Beatlemania.

But it wasn't just the Beatles' smiling faces (or George Harrison and Ringo Starr's snazzy threads) that caught the eyes of guitarists. You didn't need a particularly sharp eye to notice the thrilling sight of a few new sparkling silverface Fender amplifiers, a pair of large Fender Solid-State P.A. speaker columns and George Harrison's solid-rosewood Fender Telecaster among the treats that stood out in the newly restored film footage. No doubt many musicians will tune in to

The Beatles give their last public performance on the rooftop of Apple Corps, in London, January 30, 1969.



EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

the six-hour special when it premieres this fall to see the gear as much as to view the previously unreleased Beatles footage.

The Beatles' various eras are defined as much by musical styles as by clothing and hair fashions, and they are specified by musical equipment. Their history is full of consequential moments when new gear brought fresh sounds into the band's music. They include the 1964 arrival of George Harrison's 1963 Rickenbacker 360/12 12-string in time for the album *A Hard Day's Night*, Lennon and Harrison's acquisition of Fender Stratocasters for *Help!*, and their subsequent purchase of Epiphone Casinos in 1966. *Sgt. Pepper's* saw McCartney give up his Hofner bass for a Rickenbacker 4001S, and the White Album brought a new guitar, Harrison's "Lucy" Les Paul, into the fold. Along the way there were other instruments, including the sitar, Mellotron, Hohner electric piano and Moog synthesizer, that added new textures to their music. The *Let It Be* sessions would be the last time such a gear transformation took place, and its source was largely down to one company: Fender Musical Instruments.

THE BEATLES' HISTORY IS FULL OF MOMENTS WHEN NEW GEAR BROUGHT FRESH SOUNDS INTO THEIR MUSIC

THE TWICKENHAM SESSIONS

The January 1969 *Let It Be* sessions divide neatly into two groups: those held at Twickenham Film Studios, from January 2 through 14, and those that took place at the Beatles' Apple Studios from January 21 through 31, including their final rooftop performance. Starting out at Twickenham, Harrison largely played Lucy, the 1957 formerly goldtop Gibson Les Paul gifted to him by Eric Clapton in August 1968, as well as his Gibson J-200 acoustic. Lennon almost exclusively played his 1965 Epiphone Casino, which he'd had professionally sanded down to bare wood and covered with two coats of nitrocellulose in 1968. As for McCartney, he had his 1961 Hofner violin bass as well as his newly stripped Rickenbacker 4001S bass, which he didn't use. Also on hand was a Fender VI six-string bass of unknown vintage that Lennon played when McCartney switched from bass to piano for the songs "Let It Be" and "The Long and Winding Road"

The new equipment for Lennon, Harrison and McCartney at Twickenham consisted mainly of amps. Lennon and Harrison each had new silverface 1968 Fender Twin Reverb amps, while Paul used a new silverface 1968 Fender Bassman.

AT APPLE STUDIOS

The misery of rehearsing on Twickenham's vast, chilly soundstage in the middle of winter took its toll on the Beatles within days. After arguing first with McCartney and then Lennon, Harrison quit on January 10, returning on January 15 with the ultimatum that the group abandon Twickenham and return to Apple Studios. It was at this point that the sessions became happier, not only because of the return to familiar territory but also because of keyboardist Billy Preston, whom George had invited to sit in on the sessions. Just as Clapton's presence at Abbey Road Studios had helped make the group behave during the recording of the White Album's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," so did Preston's keep the Beatles' attitudes more positive.

Preston's arrival also corresponded to the arrival of new gear from Fender in the United States. McCartney had been eager for the sound of a Fender Rhodes electric piano to appear on the album. Andy Babiuk relates how Ivor Arbiter, Fender's U.K. agent, secured a pair of the pianos, which were rush delivered from the states. With them came a new surprise for Harrison: a solid-rosewood Telecaster, custom made for him. Fender planned to add the model, as well as a solid-rosewood Stratocaster, to its lineup and believed a pair of high-profile guitarists could help publicize the new products. While Harrison received the Telecaster prototype, the Stratocaster was intended for Jimi Hendrix, who died before it was delivered.

In addition to Harrison's new Telecaster, McCartney brought his 1963 Hofner bass to the Apple sessions, the 1961 model having been stolen shortly after the Twickenham sessions wrapped up. He also used his Martin D-28 — a right-handed model strung lefty — for "Two of Us." Lennon continued to use his Epiphone Casino, as well as Harrison's stripped Gibson J-200 and his Martin D-28, whose finish he'd sanded off, just as he had his Casino and Gibson J-160E. Finally, Lennon played a Hofner 5140 Hawaiian Standard electric lap-steel guitar on Harrison's "For You Blue."

Once again, the new silverface Fender Twin Reverb and Bassman amps were called into duty, as was a new Fender Solid-State series P.A. system, which the Beatles used to monitor vocals in the studio. In addition, Harrison used a blackface Deluxe Reverb, a transitional Fender Bassman and a Leslie 145RV rotary-speaker cabinet.

The result of these gear changes is an album that sounds unlike anything else in the Beatles' catalog. Over the next pages we dig into the guitars and other pieces of gear that defined this brief but consequential moment in the Beatles' history and music.





1968 ROSEWOOD FENDER TELECASTER

1 Delaney Bramlett in 1997 with the Rosewood Telecaster. Harrison gifted it to him in 1969.

2 This 1969 Rosewood Telecaster has a gloss poly finish, which was standard. Harrison's prototype was satin finished.

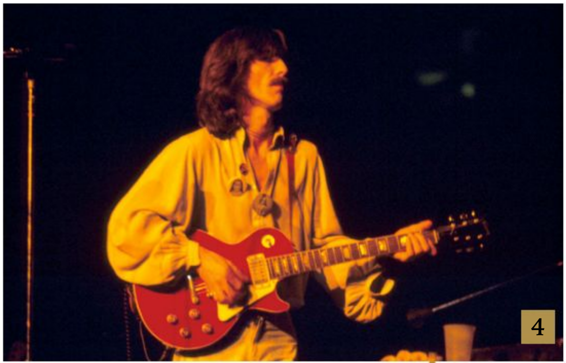
Brian Epstein had promised Jennings, Vox's parent company, "as long as I am their manager, the Beatles will use Vox amplifiers." When Epstein died in August 1967, his gentleman's agreement was nullified, opening the door for Fender sales chief Don Randall to interest the group in his company's wares. "Paul was outgoing and enthusiastic, a great guy to talk to, very upbeat," said Randall, who recalled speaking with McCartney about "pickups, styles and everything." That meeting led to Fender supplying the Beatles with a lefty Jazz Bass, a VI six-string bass and various amps during the White Album sessions.

Undoubtedly, the most intriguing guitar to come from this association was the prototype Rosewood Telecaster custom-made for Harrison and delivered during the *Let It Be* sessions. The guitar was created under master builder Roger Rossmeisl, who had previously worked for Rickenbacker, where he designed the 325 and 360/12 models played by Lennon and Harrison, respectively. The Rosewood Tele's body had a thin piece of maple sandwiched between a solid rosewood top and back, over which a clear polyurethane was applied, sanded and hand rubbed with a fine cloth to achieve a satin finish. The Telecaster was flown to England in its own seat and delivered to Apple in December 1968. Harrison used it for much of his work on *Let It Be*, including the rooftop performance. Later in 1969, he gave the guitar to Delaney Bramlett, of Delaney & Bonnie, from whom he learned slide guitar technique. Bramlett sold the guitar in 2003, where it fetched $434,750 when it was purchased by an intermediary for Harrison's widow, Olivia.

BRIAN EPSTEIN'S DEATH OPENED THE DOOR FOR FENDER TO APPROACH THE BEATLES

NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (TELECASTER & LES PAUL); ROBERT KNIGHT ARCHIVE/REDFERNS/GETTY





1957 LUCY GIBSON LES PAUL (SERIAL NUMBER 7-8789)

One of the most storied guitars in Harrison's collection, this former goldtop 1957 Les Paul was a gift from Eric Clapton, who gave it to Harrison in August 1968 during the White Album sessions. Harrison had just recommitted to playing guitar, following a year's worth of sitar studies with Ravi Shankar. Previously, John Sebastian of the Lovin' Spoonful had owned the guitar before trading it to Rick Derringer — then with the McCoys, who were touring with the Spoonful — in exchange for an amp. "It was a very, very used guitar, even when I got it," Derringer said of the Les Paul, "so I figured that since we didn't live far from Gibson's factory in Kalamazoo, the next time the group went there I'd give it to Gibson and have it refinished. I had it done at the factory in the SG-style clear red finish that was popular at the time." Derringer eventually sold it to Dan Armstrong's Guitar Service on 48th Street in New York City, which is where Clapton purchased it. The guitar saw heavy use from that point on. Clapton wielded it for his solo on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," and Harrison played it on the White Album, for his solo on *Abbey Road*'s "The End" and during the *Let It Be* Twickenham sessions. Stolen in 1973, Lucy was eventually retrieved, and Harrison owned it until his death in 2001.

3 Lucy is every bit as striking as the Rosewood Tele that was her companion during *Let It Be*.

4 Harrison performing with Lucy on his *Dark Horse* tour, December 1, 1974

STEVE MORLEY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON)

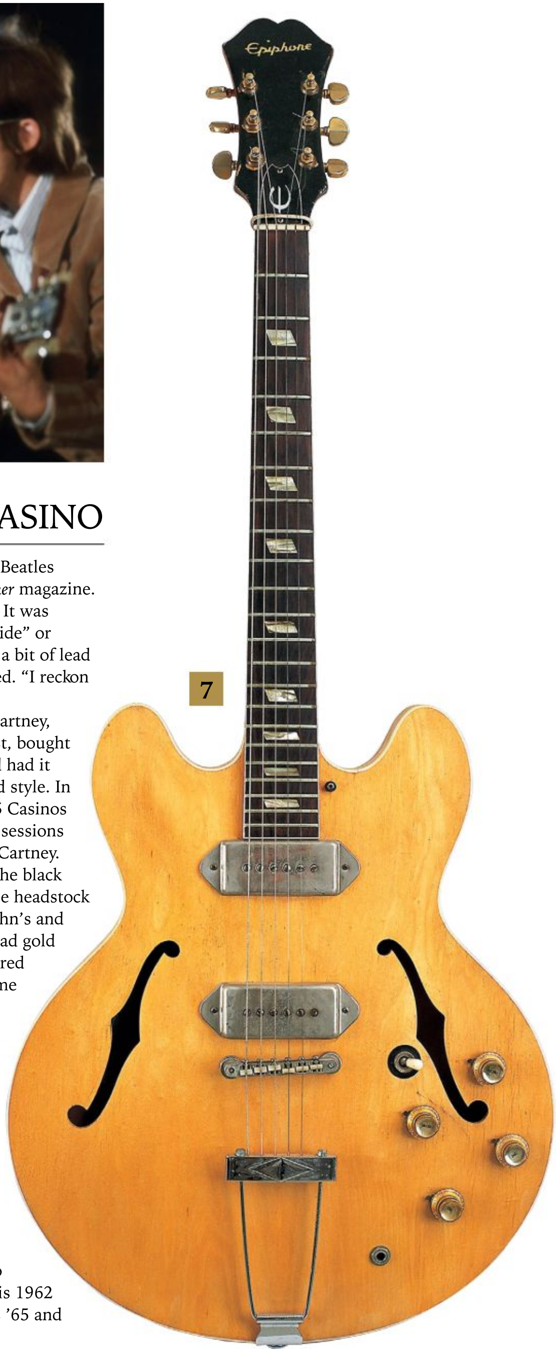
ARBITER FUZZ FACE

The Beatles had been fans of distortion since the making of their second album, *With the Beatles*, in 1963. They experimented with a Maestro Fuzz-Tone during the recording of "She Loves You" and "Don't Bother Me," and in 1965 McCartney ran his bass through a Tone Bender for the recording of "Think for Yourself." It's not known when the Arbiter Fuzz-Face entered the Beatles' world, but Harrison is seen using one in photos from the Twickenham sessions.









5 Lennon and Harrison in 1966, shortly after aquiring their Casinos

6 Lennon playing the stripped Casino with the Plastic Ono Band in 1969

7 Lennon's Casino today

1965 EPIPHONE CASINO

Early in 1965, Lennon played some new Beatles recordings to a reporter from *Melody Maker* magazine. "Hey, listen! Hear that playing by Paul?" It was probably during playback of "Ticket to Ride" or "Another Girl." "Paul's been doing quite a bit of lead guitar work this week," Lennon explained. "I reckon he's moving in."

Not content with his bass work, McCartney, who'd started in the Beatles as a guitarist, bought himself an Epiphone Casino in 1964 and had it restrung to accommodate his left-handed style. In 1966, Lennon and Harrison bought 1965 Casinos and used them on the sessions for *Revolver*, as did McCartney. Paul's '62 model had the black knobs and Gibson-style headstock of the period, while John's and George's '65 models had gold knobs and the later flared Epi head. George's came with a Bigsby, John's with the regular trapeze tailpiece. Lennon and Harrison had the guitars sanded down to the bare wood in 1968. "I think that works on a lot of guitars," Harrison said. "If you take the paint and varnish off and get the bare wood, it seems to sort of breathe." McCartney still owns his 1962 Casino, Olivia Harrison owns Harrison's '65 and Yoko Ono owns Lennon's '65.

BOB WHITAKER/KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES (1966); ANDREW MacLEAR/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES (1969); NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (CASINO)



8 The Hohner 5140 shown is the same model Lennon played on "For You Blue."

1960s HOFNER 5140 HAWAIIAN STANDARD LAP STEEL

It's unclear where it came from, but a Hofner Hawaiian Standard lap steel was among the instruments at Apple Studios on January 25, when the Beatles cut George Harrison's "For You Blue." The German-made Hofner brand was distributed in the U.K. by Selmer. According to Hofner's 1964 catalog, the 5140 lap steel featured a solid-wood body with a "lustre mirror finish, shaded sunburst to rich brown," and was fitted with a double-pole single-coil Nova-Sonic pickup with tone and volume controls. Lennon plays the lap steel on "For You Blue" using what some have identified as an early disposable butane lighter as a steel.

LENNON'S WORK ON THE LAP STEEL STIRRED HARRISON TO CALL OUT, "GO, JOHNNY, GO!"

GIBSON J-200

Harrison bought his Gibson J-200 on a trip to the U.S., presumably in 1968, as that was when it first appeared on Beatles' sessions. The guitar had a traditional sunburst finish, a gold-plated Tune-o-matic bridge and Grover tuners. Harrison had the guitar in the studio during the *Let It Be* sessions, where Lennon frequently played it, rather than his own Gibson J-160E or stripped Martin D-28. This appears to be the guitar Lennon is using to perform "Two of Us" in the original *Let It Be* film. The guitar is seen only from the side, but the woods and finish rule out the J-160E and the D-28. Harrison gave the J-200 to Bob Dylan, who played it at the Isle of Wight Festival in August 1969, a show attended by Lennon, Harrison and Ringo Starr, and it's the guitar he's holding on the cover of *Nashville Skyline*.



9 Dylan at the 1969 Isle of Wight Festival with Harrison's Gibson J-200

HOFNER 5150 PHOTOS COURTESY OF WUTZDOG GUITARS (WUTZDOG-GUITARS.DE); MIRRORPIX/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES (DYLAN)



10

10 McCartney with his 1963 Hofner 500/1 in Apple Studios

11 McCartney still owns the bass, shown here.

1963 HOFNER 500/1 VIOLIN BASS

Stu Sutcliffe was the Beatles' first bass player and used a '59 Hofner 500/5. With his departure in 1961, McCartney took over bass duties and in 1961 bought his first bass, a left-handed Hofner 500/1, in Hamburg for £30. "I got my violin bass at the Steinway shop in the town center," he recalled in 1993. "I remember going along and there was this bass which was quite cheap. My dad had always hammered into us never to get into debt because we weren't that rich."

The '61 Hofner saw him through the band's early days, but in 1963 he bought a lefty '63 500/1, which he used onstage and in the studio throughout the Beatles' glory years. The pickups provide the main visual clues to tell the two Hofners apart: The pickups on the '61 bass are close together at the neck, while the '63 bass has them spaced conventionally, at the neck and bridge.

In the roots-rock spirit of the *Let It Be* sessions, Paul returned to his Hofner 500/1, using his '61 model at Twickenham and reverting to his '63 model when the other was stolen sometime after filming wrapped at the studio. "I noticed a clip of me in the *Let It Be* rooftop sequence, and, you know, you play differently when the instrument itself isn't heavy," he said. "You're tempted to play more melodic riffs and more kind of 'guitar' parts, really. I think its tone, for a little lightweight bass, is incredible, because it really sounds like a string bass sometimes." Although he retired the 500/1 after the Beatles broke up, McCartney began using it again at the recommendation of Elvis Costello when the two collaborated in the 1980s on McCartney's *Flowers in the Dirt* and Costello's *Spike*. He still owns the bass.

"IT WAS QUITE CHEAP. MY DAD HAMMERED INTO US NOT TO GET INTO DEBT"



11

ULLSTEIN BILD/ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES (McCARTNEY); NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (HOFNER)





1960s FENDER VI BASS

Introduced in 1961, the Fender VI six-string bass was designed with guitar players in mind. Its offset body was similar to that of the Jazzmaster/Jaguar, it was tuned an octave below a standard guitar, and it had a 30-inch scale length, the same as a short-scale bass. The Beatles received one in 1968, when Fender began supplying the group with gear, and both Lennon and Harrison played it on the White Album.

The VI found use on the *Let It Be* sessions whenever McCartney was needed for piano duties. The Beatles originally intended to record live, with no overdubbing. Although they later abandoned that approach, they adhered to it through the January sessions, with the result that Lennon found himself playing the VI for both "Let It Be" and "The Long and Winding Road." He can also be seen in the *Let It Be* film playing the instrument on "Dig It," where he frets full chords. Either due to his unfamiliarity with the instrument or his lack of interest in the song, Lennon made a mess of his VI bass work on "Let It Be," prompting McCartney to replace it at the behest of producer George Martin. Lennon's bass playing on "The Long and Winding Road" was deemed sufficient.

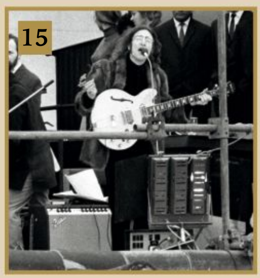
12 Lennon, with Yoko Ono, plays the VI during the *Let It Be* sessions.

13 A 1961 Fender VI. Note the different fretboard inlays and switch surround.

1968 FENDER TWIN REVERB

In 1968, Fender ushered in the silverface era for its amplifier line with a new brushed aluminum faceplate in place of the original black plate, and a silver grille cloth with subtle turquoise stripes, framed by aluminum trim. The amp had two 12-inch speakers, a vibrato circuit and spring reverb, and produced a total of 85 watts from four 6L6 power tubes. Lennon and Harrison received a pair of new silverface Fender Twin Reverbs during the *Let It Be* sessions.





14 A 1968 Fender Twin Reverb

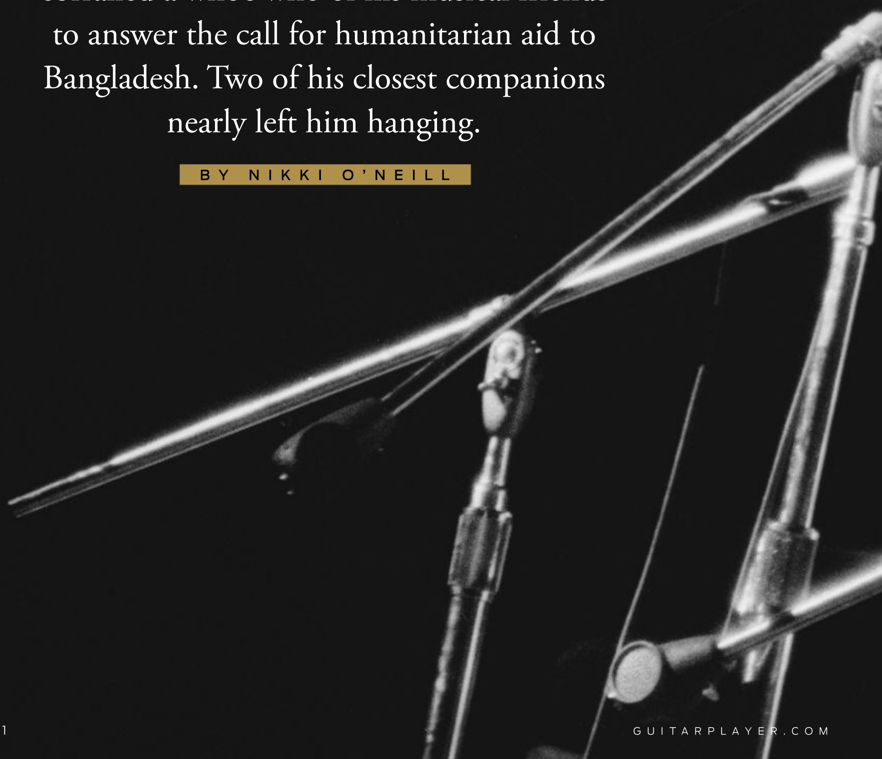
15 Lennon with his Twin Reverb on Apple's rooftop.

IMAGED BY HERITAGE AUCTIONS HA.COM (TWIN REVERB); JEFF HOCHBERG/GETTY IMAGES (ROOFTOP); NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (VI); ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES (LENNON)

WITH A LITTLE HELP

In the summer of 1971, **George Harrison** corralled a who's who of his musical friends to answer the call for humanitarian aid to Bangladesh. Two of his closest companions nearly left him hanging.

BY NIKKI O'NEILL





BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES



FIFTY YEARS AGO, Bangladesh was in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Millions of refugees in what was formerly East Pakistan were fleeing genocidal massacres and rape in the Bangladesh War of Independence, as well as lingering devastation from the 1970 Bhola cyclone, the deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded, that left at least half a million dead in its wake. The people were starving, but their plight was largely unknown in the West. Ravi Shankar knew he had to do something to bring attention and aid to the country. The famed Indian sitarist reached out to his friend George Harrison and asked him to do what only a famous former Beatle could do: Bring musicians and fans together to help end the disaster.

RIGHT: George Harrison and Bob Dylan perform during Dylan's set.

Peter Frampton was tapped to play the show but was never informed.

What Harrison and Shankar achieved was a massive benefit concert that was the first of its kind. Held 50 years ago this summer, on August 1, the Concert for Bangladesh gathered rock and roll's royalty in New York City for a pair of shows to raise money for — and awareness of — the humanitarian crisis unfolding halfway around the globe. In a matter of weeks, Harrison managed to secure participation



from such luminaries as his fellow former Beatle Ringo Starr, keyboardist Billy Preston, pianist and guitarist Leon Russell, bassist and longtime Beatle friend Klaus Voormann, studio guitar ace Jesse Ed Davis, Zappa collaborator Don Preston, the up-and-coming band Badfinger and a number of other musicians and singers. Together with Shankar and his fellow musicians, they performed a pair of sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden, including a 2:30 p.m. matinee and 8:00 p.m. show.

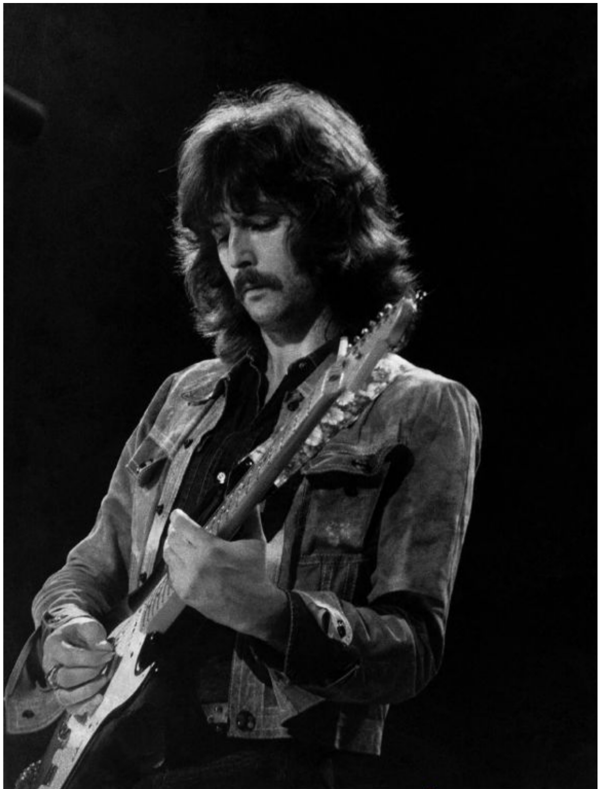
The concerts drew 40,000 people and raised $250,000 for UNICEF, while the 1971 triple live album and 1972 documentary of the show eventually raised millions more. Even before the concert took place, Harrison had released his single "Bangla Desh" on the Beatles' Apple label. The track, which detailed the plight of the Bangladeshi people, was put into heavy rotation in the lead-up to the shows, bringing the single to number 23 on the *Billboard* charts.

Harrison's achievement would prove nothing short of a miracle. No rock and roll musician had attempted anything like it before, and no template existed for a show of this size and with guests of such stature. The Concert for Bangladesh would cement the notion of a moral imperative for rock and rollers to do their part for those in need, as it laid the groundwork for the charity concerts that followed in the 1980s and beyond, including Live Aid and Farm Aid.

Yet in the days before the show, Harrison was filled with doubt and insecurity. He hadn't performed in front of a large crowd since the Beatles' final tour, in 1966. But those wild shows were scripted affairs

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES (FRAMPTON); MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON AND DYLAN)





Clapton switched to his "Brownie" Strat in the second set, after starting with his Gibson Byrdland (see page 49).

KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GAMMA-KEYSTONE VIA GETTY IMAGES (CLAPTON)

lasting roughly 30 minutes, with the band's performance entirely secondary to the sight of the four mop tops shaking their bodies onstage. Concerts had grown up in the intervening years and become listening experiences. And this particularly lengthy two-show stint — from the planning to the staging to the musicians, many of whom were flying in from the U.K., India and various parts of the U.S. — was all on Harrison's shoulders. Many performers, like Leon Russell, had canceled other appearances, at great expense, to participate. As Harrison noted, "Nobody's getting paid." He was so focused on the concert's purpose that he seemed to forget its sheer star power, and openly fretted that nobody would care enough to buy tickets.

Remarkably, among all his friends in the show, Harrison would be kept waiting, wondering and worrying over the attendance of two who were his closest: Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan. At the time, Clapton was deep into the throes of heroin addiction and uncertain of his ability to perform. Dylan, meanwhile, was a recluse, having given his last live performance in 1969, at the Isle of Wight.

But Harrison was among the best-connected people in rock at the time. As the August 1 concert date approached and Clapton increasingly looked like a no-show, he turned for help to another friend: Peter Frampton. Harrison had known the guitarist, then in Humble Pie, for a couple of years. Frampton tracked guitars on singer Doris Troy's self-titled album, produced by Harrison for the Beatles' Apple Records, and he played acoustic guitar on *All Things Must Pass*, Harrison's third solo record. As it happened, Frampton and Humble Pie were touring in the U.S. that summer and spending time in New York City, where they were mixing their 1971 live breakthrough, *Performance: Rockin' the Fillmore*, recorded the previous May 28 and 29.

"On the weekends, we'd fly off to perform, opening the bill for many different artists, and on weekdays we'd be at Electric Lady Studios in New York with Eddie Kramer, mixing the *Rockin' the Fillmore* album," Frampton recalls to *Guitar Player*. "I knew I was going to see George's shows, and I asked if he needed me to play guitar, but they were overbooked with guitarists. So I wished him all the best with the show and told him I'd come see it."

Unexpectedly, Frampton found himself invited to dine with Harrison and his wife, Patti, while they were in Manhattan. "Afterwards, we went back to the Pierre [*Hotel*], and he invited me up to their suite," Frampton explains. "There were two electrics sitting by the window, and maybe one or two little amps. George asked if I wanted to play some guitar,

"I ASKED GEORGE AND TERRY, 'YOU MEAN YOU WANTED ME TO PLAY?' THE LAST THING I WANTED TO BE WAS A STAND-IN FOR ERIC CLAPTON"
— PETER FRAMPTON



and I said, 'Yeah, sure,' trying to keep my excitement under control.

"And without a word, he just started running through the songs they were going to do. My mind started going 14,000 miles an hour. I couldn't understand why we were doing this if the guitar positions for the concert were filled. We must've played six to 10 songs, and he was checking me out to see if I was up to speed, which, of course, I was. How can you not be when it comes to the Beatles' songs?"

In the days afterward, Frampton flew south to play a couple of shows with Humble Pie. Back in New York City, the behind-the-scenes drama escalated as the August 1 concert date arrived. Frampton returned on the day of the show. "I'd missed the first one, but I planned to go to the second, and so I picked up my tickets and backstage pass," he says. "I watched the entire show, and at the end, I made my way to the side of the stage. Terry Doran [*Harrison's personal assistant*] saw me, and his eyes got really big. He said, 'Where have you been?' I said, 'What do you mean? I've been on the road.' And he said, 'Yeah, but we had no way of getting hold of you!'

Confused, Frampton explained that no one had asked for his number, adding that Harrison knew he would see him following the show. "And Terry says, 'Well, George wants to speak to you!'

"So as he takes me backstage, he pulls me right into Bob Dylan, who gives me the 'I could slice your head off with the back of my hand' kind of look."

Meeting up with Harrison, Frampton says he learned that Clapton had been bedridden while in New York City and unable to make any rehearsals. "This was during his heavy drug phase," Frampton says. "Whether he had some or was trying to give them up, I don't know. But when he wasn't able to rehearse, they tried to get hold of me, because they wanted me there — just in case.

"I asked George and Terry, 'You mean you wanted me to play?' And they said, 'Yeah.' "

In the end, a cameraman from the film crew provided Clapton with methadone, making him well enough to perform both shows. "I'm glad that Eric was able to play somehow, since a lot of people would've been very disappointed if he didn't, especially George," Frampton says. "The last thing I wanted to be was a stand-in for Eric Clapton. I would've done it if George had gotten hold of me and the situation was more dire. But I'll never know how dire it actually was."

RIGHT: Badfinger in the studio. (from left) Tom Evans, Joey Molland, Mike Gibbins and Pete Ham

Madison Square Garden was sold out for both shows.



According to Joey Molland, it was a closer call than Frampton knew. At the time, Molland was a member of the Welsh rock group Badfinger, one of Apple Records' most prominent signings, thanks to their early hit "Come and Get It," written and produced by Paul McCartney. The group had performed on Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, and Harrison had taken over producing the group for their 1971 album, *Straight Up*, in late May 1971. But as he found himself sidelined by the Bangladesh benefit, the sessions stalled and he invited the group to perform at the concerts. Molland, bassist Tom Evans and guitarist Pete Ham performed on acoustic guitars, while Badfinger drummer Mike Gibbins played percussion. In addition, Ham assisted Harrison on his captivating performance of "Here Comes the Sun."

MEL FINKELSTEIN/NY DAILY NEWS/GETTY IMAGES (MSG);



Eric Clapton showed up, and he was playing a Gibson Byrdland, one of those beautiful, blonde Chuck Berry guitars, which we thought was a bit odd," he says. "But everybody was enjoying it."

Just as the dress rehearsal wrapped up, Bob Dylan made his appearance, much to everyone's surprise. "There had been rumors that 'someone' might come up, and we thought it'd be John [*Lennon*]," Molland explains. "But we had finished the rehearsal and were sitting in the auditorium, waiting for our cars, when Bob Dylan walked onstage with his harmonica stand and a small acoustic guitar, and started singing his songs for about 40 minutes. George, Ringo and Leon ran down to the stage, and they played a few songs all together before they put together that part of the set for the show. It was great to see them working through vocal harmonies."

"IT WAS GREAT TO SEE DON PRESTON WITH HIS GIBSON '58 EXPLORER. IT ALWAYS ASTOUNDED ME HOW GOOD THEY SOUND"
— JOEY MOLLAND

Reportedly, Dylan was still harboring doubts about performing at such a large event, much to Harrison's frustration. "Look, it's not my scene, either," Harrison told him. "At least you've played on your own in front of a crowd before. I've never done that." Even after the dress rehearsal, Dylan remained noncommittal, giving Harrison one more thing to worry about. "I'm sure George was nervous," Molland says. "He hadn't played in front of an audience for a few years, and he had never played these songs live. Plus, the whole event was on his shoulders. He wasn't sure if anybody was going to come." But of course they did. Fans descended on Madison Square Garden to buy up tickets, and the two shows quickly sold out.

Given the number of guitarists in the show, it's difficult to track every guitar used over the two

"We went to New York 10 days before the concerts," Molland explains. "George had arranged for rhythm section rehearsals at the Steinway store in downtown Manhattan, where they had a big room upstairs. It was a lot of fun, going over the intros, outros and the sequencing of events within songs. I think we rehearsed Monday through Friday, and on the Saturday we went to the Garden to do a couple of hours of dress rehearsal."

Molland confirms Clapton had been a no-show. But while Frampton believes the guitarist was already in New York City, Molland contends he was still in England. "I believe George sent a car for Clapton, and each day he stayed in his house," he says. "I wasn't privy to what was happening to him, and I don't like to speculate, but he was going through something. But on Friday night, two nights before the show, he got on the plane in London, was in New York Saturday morning and was at the rehearsal in the afternoon. He had his parts together. I didn't see him screw up, but mind you, I was really concerned about my own guitar parts."

The dress rehearsal was the first time the members of the main band played together, though second drummer Jim Keltner had yet to show up. "Otherwise, the whole band was there, including Ringo Starr, Leon Russell, the Hollywood Horns and Jim Horn, and the backup singers with Don Nix," Molland says.

Given that Clapton played a Fender Stratocaster on *All Things Must Pass* the previous year, Molland expected him to show up with one or two. "But yes,



A view of the stage showing nearly all the performers during the main set.

THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS/GETTY IMAGES (STAGE)



WHILE THEIR GUITARS GENTLY WEEP

Here are the main axes that wailed at the Bangladesh benefit.

BY NIKKI O'NEILL

AS PETER FRAMPTON noted, there was no shortage of guitarists at the Concert for Bangladesh. And while some of the guitars that were played at one or both shows are famous — consider Eric Clapton's "Brownie" Strat, which he used for the second show after abandoning the Gibson Byrdland he played in the first set — others remain mired in mystery. Here's a guide to the main examples wielded at the concerts.

1 GEORGE HARRISON'S MYSTERY STRAT

Harrison spent much of the show playing a stripped Fender Strat with a '50s maple neck, a guitar whose background has baffled many. Its only known appearances were at the Concert for Bangladesh and on *The Dick Cavett Show* two months later, when Harrison sat in on slide guitar with Gary Wright and the Wonder Wheel. Some believe he rented it from Manny's Music in Manhattan, but it's unlikely he would have had the same guitar twice. And as Molland says, "I don't think he would've rented a guitar for a show like that." Perhaps it was a gift from Clapton, who had purchased six mid-'50s Strats for a bargain price at the Sho-Bud guitar shop in Nashville, and given three of them to Pete Townshend, Steve Winwood and Harrison. Another theory is that the Bangladesh Strat is a late '50s–early '60s transitional model that featured a maple neck and three-ply pickguard, and that Harrison had simply stripped it of its finish, just as he and Lennon had done with their Epiphone Casinos around the time of the White Album.

"There was a phase in England, where everybody wanted their Fender guitars stripped," Frampton says, "including me, [*Humble Pie bassist*] Greg Ridley and [*Small Faces/Faces multi-instrumentalist*] Ian McLagan. Ian and I were pretty handy, so we got a paint stripper, got all the paint off and put polyurethane varnish on. None of us realized at the time how we were destroying the value of those guitars."

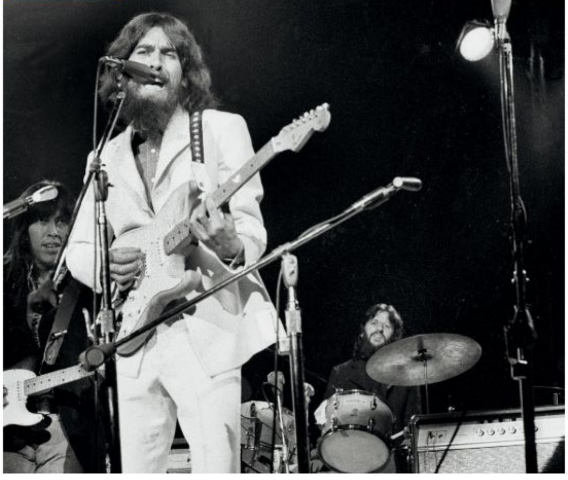
Of course, many players of the time simply gave their now-priceless guitars — like Harrison's rosewood Telecaster [*see page 36*] — away to friends. Harrison related the story of how he gave this particular Strat to Spike Milligan: "He was at my house one day with Peter Sellers. Peter was playing the drums, Spike was playing the piano, and I was playing guitar. Then Spike got off the piano and wanted to play the guitar, so I plugged him in to this Strat through a little Champ amplifier. He said, 'Oh, I haven't played for 30 years,' but he just picked it up and it sounded like Django Reinhardt or something. And I thought, Well, that's good. So when he left, I put it in the case, and put it and the Champ in Peter Sellers' boot and told him, 'When you drop Spike off give him this. It's the Strat from the Concert for Bangladesh.' "

2 1963 MARTIN D-28

Bob Dylan bought this Martin in the late '60s and used it for 10 years, according to his repairman, Larry Cragg, who bought the guitar from him in 1977 for $500. Cragg, who nicknamed it Bob, kept the guitar unplayed in its original case and in a humidity- and temperature-controlled environment until he sold it at auction in 2017 for $396,500.

1 George Harrison's mystery Strat

2 Dylan's 1963 Martin D-28



THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON); MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (DYLAN)







EDDIE MALLUK/ATLAS ICONS (HARPTONE); ICON AND IMAGE/GETTY IMAGES (PRESTON); BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES(CLAPTON)

3 Harrison's Harptone L-6NC now hangs in the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City

4 Don Preston plays his 1958 Gibson Korina Explorer

5 Clapton wields his Gibson Byrdland

3 HARPTONE L-6NC

This six-string acoustic guitar, with its zero-fret design and unique headstock shape and double-neck truss rod, is currently on display at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City. It's said to have been a gift to Harrison from Peter Drake, the pedal-steel master who played on *All Things Must Pass*. Harptone asked Drake to give a few guitars to the Beatles to try out, and Ringo Starr liked his so much that the company made him a signature model. Harrison owned and used at least four, including this guitar and an L-12NC 12-string that he purchased for approximately $150 prior to recording the White Album. Badfinger members used the 12-string on the sessions for *All Things Must Pass* and Badfinger bassist Tom Evans played it at the Concert for Bangladesh. Harrison played the L-12 when he guested on Splinter's 1974 debut album, *The Place I Love*, and gave it to member Bobby Purvis. The guitar was auctioned in 2005 and sold to a private collector. It appeared at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Museum's Concert for Bangladesh exhibit in 2005–2006.

4 1958 GIBSON KORINA EXPLORER

This is the Explorer on which Don Preston delivered his fiery solo on "Jumpin Jack Flash," inspiring Eric Clapton to get one of his own. The Explorer was among the futuristic 1950s designs Gibson launched, along with the Flying V and Moderna. Preston's guitar is from the model's first year, when Gibson shipped just 19 copies, making it one of the most valued guitars on the vintage market.

5 GIBSON BYRDLAND

A rental or a guitar that he owned? Nobody seems to know when Clapton picked up the Byrdland he played at the early show on August 1, but his choice of the guitar continues to be a source for discussion among guitarists. Some believe it was a 1950s model, pointing to the rounded cutaway, which was sharper on 1960s models. Others point to the double parallelogram inlays and black pickguard, which are typical for the 1960s ES-350T thinline model. Some claim that the body looks deeper than a Byrdland or 350T, suggesting that it's an L-5 CES. But other features — including the headstock's "torch" inlay, white-outlined truss-rod cover, gold-plated tuners, f-hole bindings, multi-ply body binding and the tailpiece — strongly suggest it's a Byrdland. Even Clapton said so.



concerts. Harrison played a stripped Fender Stratocaster of unknown provenance, as well as a pair of Harptone acoustics: an L-6NC and an L-12NC [*see sidebar, page 48*]. While Clapton played the Byrdland for the first show, he switched to his "Brownie" Stratocaster for the second concert. Don Preston arrived with his Gibson '58 Explorer, a model that particularly excited Molland. "It's just an incredible guitar," he enthuses. "It always astounded me how good they sound, and how light they were."

"WE WERE ALL MIC'D UP, AND WE SAT NEXT TO THE HORN SECTION. I WAS WORRIED PEOPLE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HEAR THE ACOUSTIC GUITARS"
— JOEY MOLLAND

Molland has a clear recollection of the acoustics he and his Badfinger bandmates played. "All of them were late-'60's models, and they were used when we got them. I played a Gibson J-50, as I enjoyed the smoother tone. Tommy had brought his D-41, but he never played it; George had his Harptones and said he might be able to get some for us, but that never came together, so Tommy borrowed George's 12-string. Pete played a Martin D-28. And there were no acoustic amps or pickups back then, so we were all mic'd up, and we sat next to the horn section. I was worried people wouldn't be able to hear the acoustic guitars. But it turned out okay, because you can hear us on the record.

"We were a little bit nervous about playing right and doing the job well, so it wasn't fun for us, but it was really exciting: the place being sold out, people losing their minds and doing something for the good of it all." For Molland, one of the show's highlights was organist Billy Preston's impromptu dance during the band's performance of his hit "That's the Way God Planned It." "He started to dance across the stage toward us, rolling his arms and skittling his legs," the guitarist recalls. "And we were sitting on stools playing acoustic guitars, thinking, My God, he's gonna run into us! But both shows went off as planned."

ABOVE: Harrison and Ringo Starr



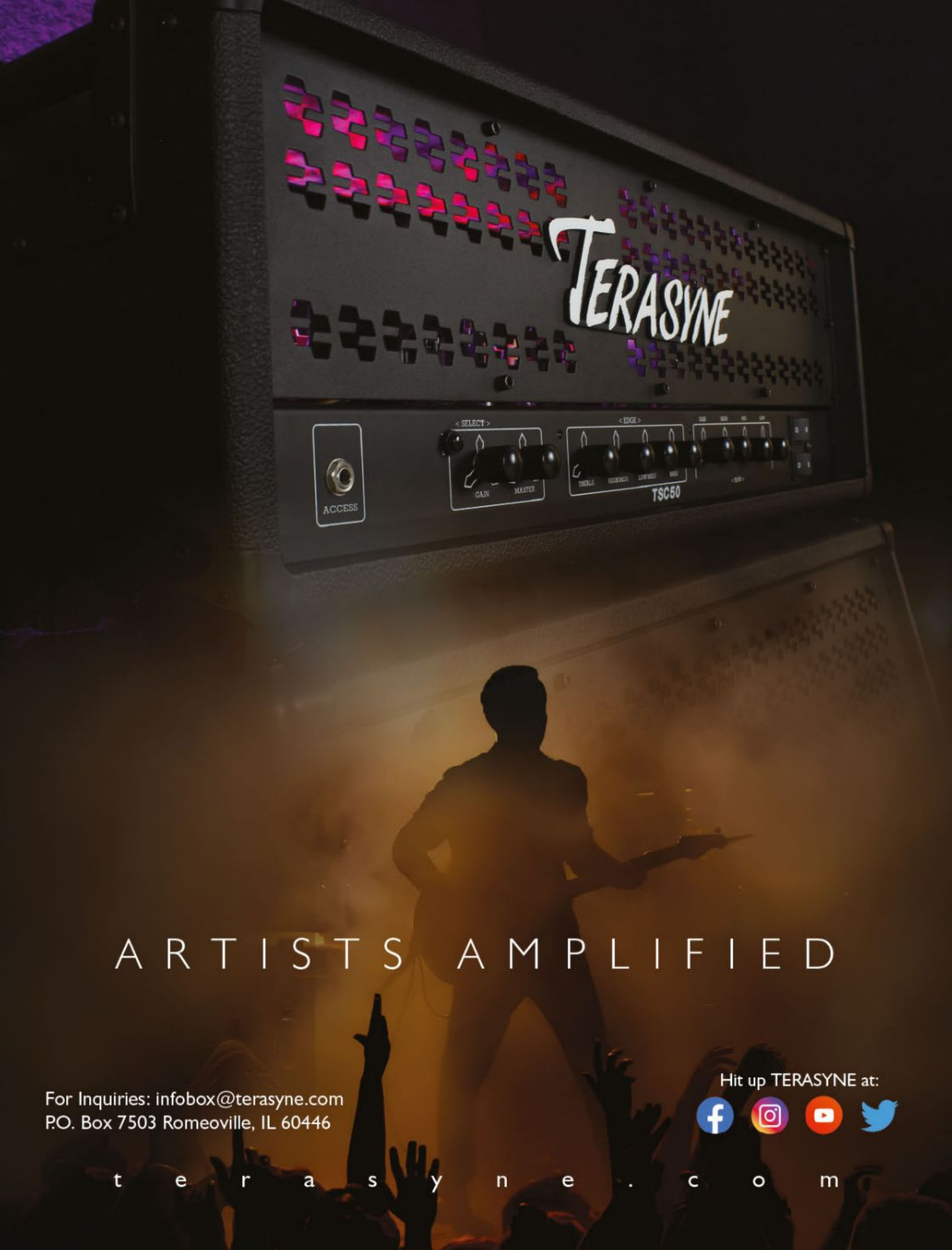
Dylan with Harrison and Russell, who performed a show-stopping medley of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Young Blood."

In the end, Dylan showed up. Following his performance of "Here Comes the Sun" with Pete Ham, Harrison picked up his Fender Stratocaster and reviewed the set list taped to its body to see what was next: "Bob?" it read. Harrison looked around anxiously. To his relief, Dylan was making his way to the stage, his 1963 Martin D-28 strapped on and a harmonica in the holder around his neck. "He had his guitar on and his shades," Harrison recalled. "He was sort of coming on, coming [*pumps his arms and shoulders*]… It was only at that moment that I knew for sure he was going to do it."

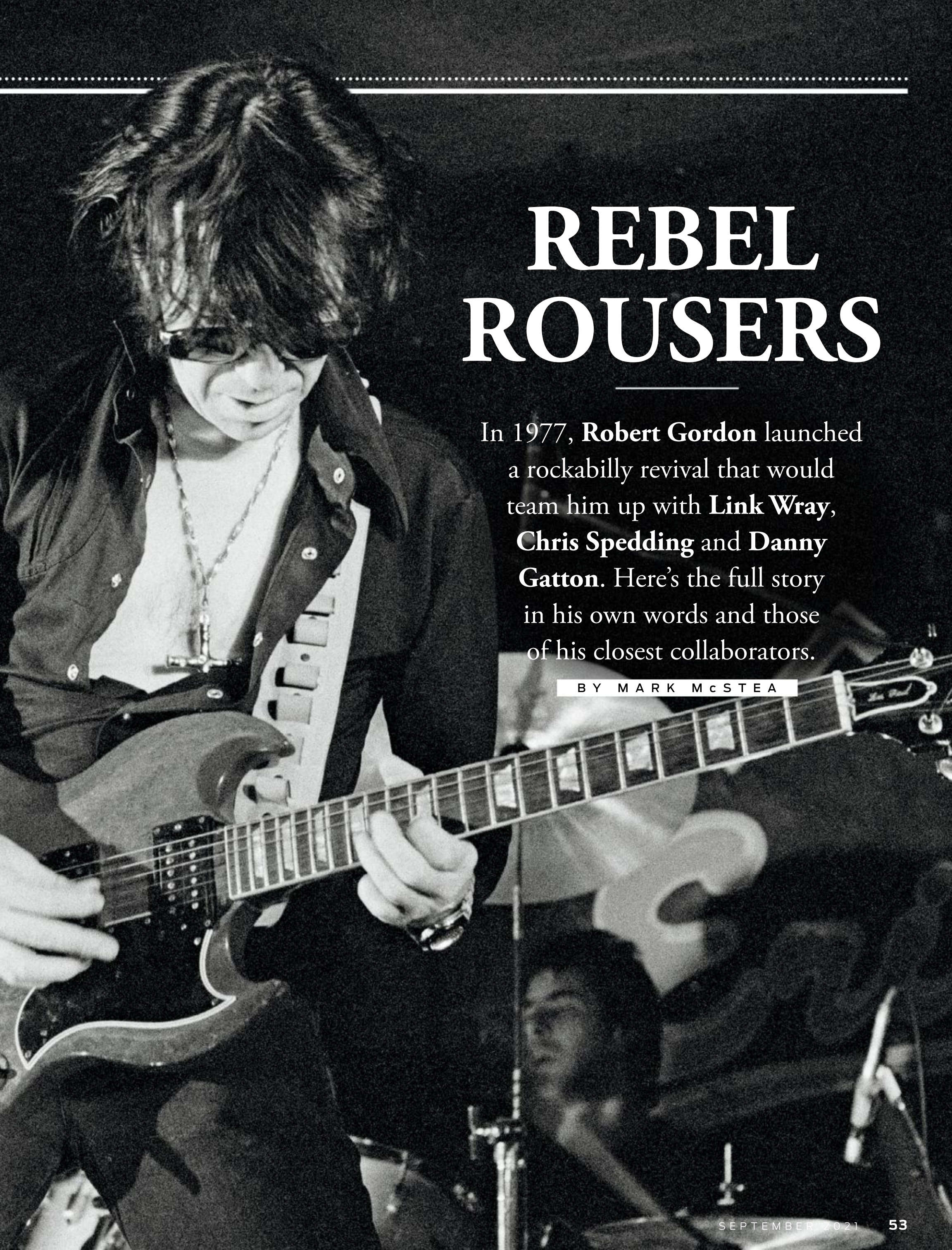
Harrison turned to the microphone to deliver the biggest applause line of the show: "I'd like to bring on a friend of us all, Mr. Bob Dylan!"

The Concert for Bangladesh was a triumph of ingenuity and musical talent, a spur-of-the-moment project that launched a new concept in concerts. Its benefits would take years to reach the afflicted country. Those involved in the concert's planning, including Apple manager Allen Klein, neglected to register the event for tax-exempt status in the U.S. and U.K., with the result that millions in tax dollars were held up for years. But ultimately, the album and film would raise and deliver an estimated $45 million, and Harrison would pass along the wisdom he gained from the experience to Bob Geldof when he launched Live Aid, ensuring that event's estimated £50 million found its way to victims of the Ethiopian famine. Harrison's groundbreaking humanitarian work continues to inspire musicians around the world.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (DYLAN); THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON & STARR)


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REBEL ROUSERS

In 1977, **Robert Gordon** launched a rockabilly revival that would team him up with **Link Wray**, **Chris Spedding** and **Danny Gatton**. Here's the full story in his own words and those of his closest collaborators.

BY MARK McSTEA

ROBERT GORDON IS a man born out of time. Many fans and music historians believe that, had he been recording in the '50s, he might have become a rockabilly legend. Instead, he kickstarted the worldwide rockabilly revival in 1977 with the release of his debut album, *Robert Gordon With Link Wray*, made in tandem with the guitar legend behind the 1958 instrumental hit "Rumble." Great things were expected for Gordon. His early albums were produced by Richard Gottehrer, the legendary producer and songwriter behind 1960s hits like "Hang On Sloopy," "My Boyfriend's Back" and "I Want Candy," as well as a major player in the '70s and '80s who launched the careers of Madonna, Blondie, the Ramones and Talking Heads. Gordon and Wray's second album, 1978's *Fresh Fish Special*, featured former Elvis Presley vocalists the Jordanaires and included a cover of Bruce Springsteen's "Fire" that had the Boss himself on keyboards. In 1981, Gordon had his biggest success with *Are You Gonna Be the One*, and scored a hit with "Someday, Someway," a rockabilly tune written by Marshall Crenshaw, based on the 1957 Gene Vincent tune "Lotta Lovin'."

But then Gordon was sidelined by another rockabilly act, the Stray Cats, who became one of the biggest bands of the early '80s. "If I'd been coming through in the MTV age, I think I'd have become a big star," Gordon tells *Guitar Player*. "Back then, people who didn't even tour could become huge just because of MTV. I had a real strong image, and the music was unlike everything that was getting airplay."

OPENING: Robert Gordon and Link Wray onstage at Eric's Club, Liverpool, England, January 29, 1978

OPPOSITE: Wray onstage at My Father's Place, Roslyn, New York, March 18, 1978

BELOW: With (from left) Tony Garnier, Bruce Springsteen and Chris Spedding, Asbury Park, May 27, 1979



Gordon not only paved the way for rockabilly's return to the mainstream — he also revived the career of Wray, who had been out of the spotlight for years since his '50s instrumental hits. Wray made a number of rootsy, proto-Americana albums in the early '70s but was mainly playing the oldies circuit when Gordon plucked him to be his guitarist. Like John Mayall, the singer became an act through which many great guitarists passed. After Wray, Gordon went on to recruit Chris Spedding and Danny Gatton. More recently, he's worked with players like Eddie Angel, Quentin Jones and, most recently, Danny B. Harvey, who co-produced Gordon's 2020 album, *Rockabilly for Life*, which has guest spots by Albert Lee, Steve Wariner and Steve Cropper.

"LINK KNEW JUST ONE WAY TO PLAY AND THAT WAS WITH THE VOLUME ON FULL"
— ROBERT GORDON

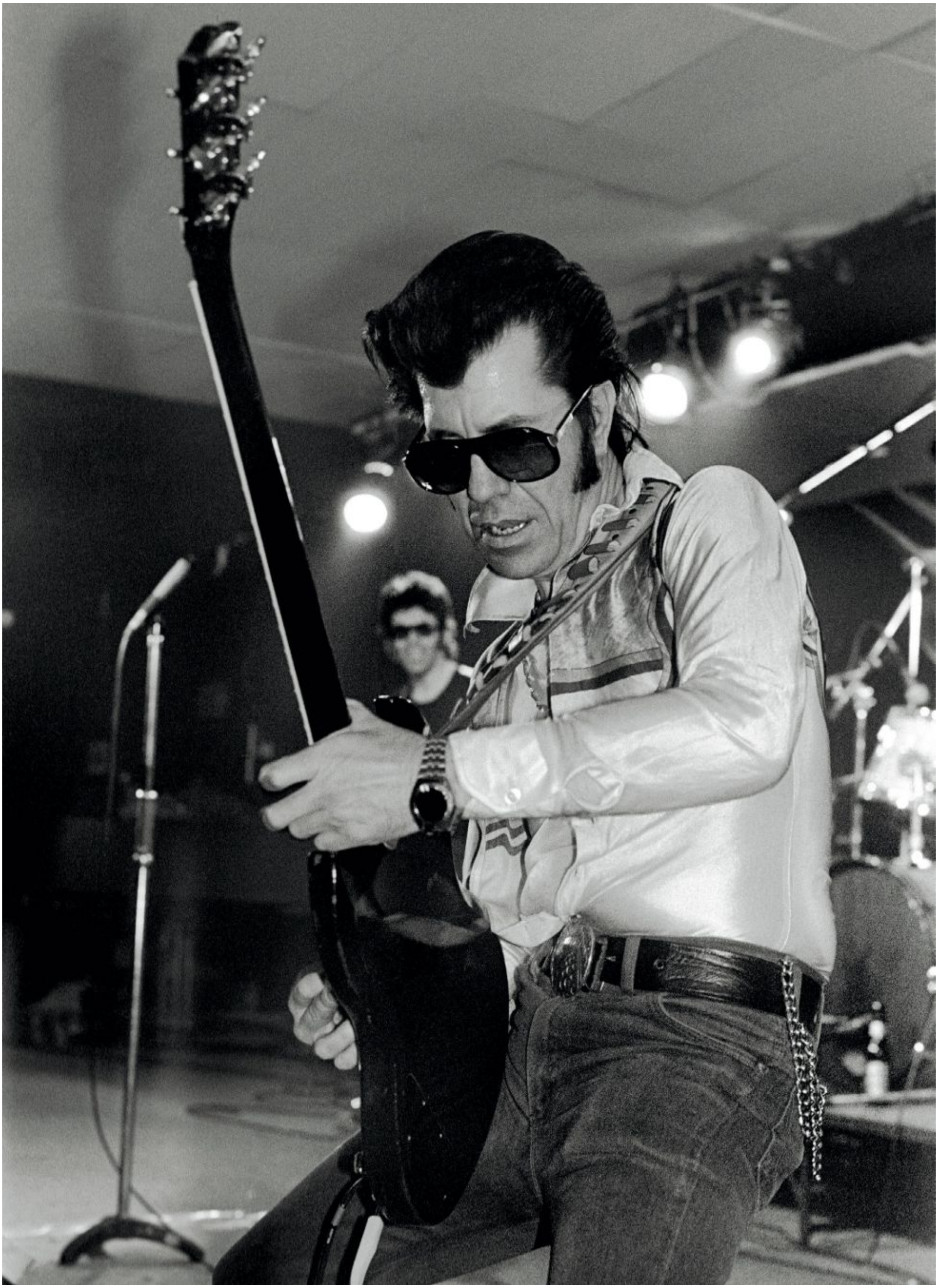
"The guitarists that I worked with never changed my approach to my music," he said. "I've always done my thing. I choose the songs, and I let the guitarists do their thing. I don't step on their territory, but I like to hear what I like to hear, and it works out good. When you're working with people like Chris Spedding and Danny Gatton, you don't have to tell them too much. These guys have been there and done that, and they're the best. I always let them do their thing before I open my mouth."

Here, we let Gordon, and a number of key contributors to his work — including Spedding, Jones, Harvey and Gottehrer — tell the tale of his nearly 50-year career in rockabilly.

ROBERT GORDON Link Wray was a wonderful friend. He was 20 years older than me. I first saw him when I was nine years old at an amusement park in Glen Echo, Maryland. My father took me and my brother there, and they used to have shows on the weekends. He was doing "Rumble," and it blew me away. When I got the deal with Private Stock [*Records*], Richard Gottehrer asked me who I'd like to work with. We knocked it around for a couple of weeks and then he suggested Link, and I said that would be awesome. He got Link to come to New York, and we hit it off.

RICHARD GOTTEHRER I met Robert while he was still singing for New York City punk band Tuff Darts. He said to me that he was thinking of leaving them and putting together a rockabilly band. He was really knowledgeable about the music. He really knew his stuff. The first recordings that we did, I wish I still had them. Johnny Thunders played guitar and Marc Bell played drums. We did it at Plaza Sound Studios, where I did a lot of recording, including the first two

KEVIN CUMMINS/GETTY IMAGES (ERIC'S CLUB); EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Blondie albums. This wasn't really a band that was going to hold together, because Marc wanted to do his own thing and became Marky Ramone, and Johnny was Johnny. [*laughs*] We knew we had to find another guitarist.

GORDON Link wasn't playing rock and roll as such when he joined up with me. I guess he'd been out of the limelight for a while. It had probably been 20 years since he'd had a hit record. I'm very proud of the fact that I wanted to put his name on the album cover. It was billed as Robert Gordon With Link Wray. That was my decision, because I wanted him to get the recognition he deserved, and then he went on to have a second coming, I guess you could say.

GOTTEHRER Link was doing the oldies circuit when we caught up with him, almost forgotten by the younger generation of record buyers at the time that we brought him onboard. He was very interested in much heavier, guitar-driven music, rather than straightforward rock and roll. We really connected on a personal level. He used to stay at my house when he was in town.



Chris Spedding with Gibson Les Paul Custom and Conn ST-11 Strobotuner, at home in Wimbledon, London, 1978

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

GORDON Link was a great entertainer. He was terrific in the studio because he was controlled. [*laughs*] Live, it was a different matter, and it was difficult for me as a singer. Link knew just one way to play and that was with the volume on full. That was the kiss of death for me. We did the two albums and two major tours, but then we parted ways, remaining friends. Link was a great guy to hang out with, and he was kind of a mentor to me, as that was my first real experience out on the road, even though I'd been in local bands before that.

Link was a very quick worker in the studio. He was a redneck, and his chords sounded like him. No one else plays chords like Link. He could play a slow, soulful ballad and play a ferocious solo that could still make you cry. He was amazing. Link's main guitar on the records was a '61 SG. He dropped that though and broke the damned neck. He then went on tour with a '66 Yamaha SG-2, which he called Screamin' Red. He'd turn that all the way up and just beat the hell out of it. [*laughs*] For amps he was using an old tweed Fender Bassman, I think. He'd turn it way up loud. He had a lot of soul. It just got too loud for me in the end. I think it did for a lot of people. I'm sure he lost a lot of hearing along the way, I know I did, and I have to wear hearing aids these days. This is what happens when you play rock and roll from 15 years old like we did. [*laughs*]

GOTTEHRER The way that Link played, the way he attacked the instrument, the spirit that came out of it, I think these were the elements that made him so influential to so many rock guitarists. You never knew what you were going to get from Link. He'd play a solo, and it could be amazing, but if there was just one part that wasn't right, he would never punch it in; he had to do the whole solo again, or else he just didn't feel it. You had to capture him in the moment. He was very unpredictable. It is a crime that he isn't in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Link understood the music perfectly, of course. He felt the Elvis vibe that Robert had. Everybody respected him in the studio, and he was quite a fast worker. He could intuitively do what every song required without any discussion. We spent a few weeks on the albums at most, while other acts were taking months.

GORDON I think there is a lot of stuff still in the can from those two albums with Link. I had multitrack tapes from all of those sessions that got stolen. I had



PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Gordon and Spedding performing at Park West, Chicago, April 6, 1979

a whole wall full of tapes with outtakes and everything man, and somebody ripped them off. There must be some copies somewhere. It's a real shame — there was so much good stuff on there. I've still got some reel-to-reel tapes that are good enough to use for one last play before they fall apart, I guess. Maybe someday someone might want to come in and try to do something with them.

It was totally mutual when we parted. Link wanted to do his own thing, and of course I was moving on too. I wanted to get into a more modern sound, and that was why I went with Chris Spedding next. I loved Link, but he was really locked into a certain time, and although I've always done music from that period, I've mixed it with all kinds of things, including new music by new writers as well, and it got a little tired for me.

GOTTEHRER Chris was primarily a studio musician when he joined Robert, whereas Link was primarily a live musician. So Chris brought a very different approach. They were both amazing guitar players. Link had a more organic quality; he could just spit solos out. But Chris was more in control of what he was doing, I think. With Link, it was in his fingers, and perhaps with Chris it came from his head via his fingers. That is in no way meant to diminish his ability. He is a tremendous player. It's just a different approach.

CHRIS SPEDDING I got a call from Richard Gottehrer saying that Robert and Link were doing my song "Wild Wild Women" live, and he'd suggested maybe I'd like to get up onstage with them for that song. I thought that was a great idea, as I'd never thought of myself as a lead singer, and Robert had such a great voice that I thought it would be perfect if I could get him to sing a few more of my songs. I then got another call from Richard saying Link and Robert were splitting up and did I want to play guitar with him. I thought that was even better in terms of getting my songs out there. I was still living in London at the time, and I'd just returned from touring in America with Bryan Ferry. I really loved New York. I thought, I'm going to move to New York; I've got nothing to lose and I've got a gig. In the end though, he's never, to this day, recorded any of my songs, not even "Wild Wild Women." [*laughs*]

"HE REALLY WAS ONE OF THE VERY FIRST PEOPLE TO REVIVE ROCKABILLY, BUT HE'S NEVER REALLY GOT THE CREDIT FOR THAT"
— CHRIS SPEDDING

GORDON Chris was still loud as shit but definitely more manageable than Link. We always use traditional monitors rather than in-the-ear monitoring, which exposes you to more volume. He originally came over to do the one album, *Rockabilly Boogie*, and stayed for 40 years. [*laughs*]

SPEDDING Before hooking up with Robert, I was playing music that was, to my mind, very ’50s American influenced, but when I played it to Richard, he said it sounded really English. [*laughs*] I was aware of the first album that Robert recorded with Link, so I knew where he was coming from. I didn’t slavishly try to reproduce ’50s rockabilly sounds; I would just leave a Memory Man on for slapback echo and never really adjust the tempo. I think my amp was a Fender Deluxe Reverb, and I played a Les Paul and a Gretsch 6120, but I’d changed the pickups for Gibsons so that I could sound more like Scotty Moore. I would often use my Flying V live, though.

“DANNY WOULD DO SOME TRICKS LIVE, BUT I WAS NEVER A FAN OF HIM PLAYING SLIDE WITH THE BEER BOTTLE”
— ROBERT GORDON

GORDON Me and Chris are still working together even now. He played on a track on my last album, *Rockabilly for Life*.

SPEDDING I guess we’ve come to an understanding with each other after 40 years of playing together on and off. We never rehearse. He’ll email me and ask me to learn whatever song he might want to do. We’ll just run it once at the soundcheck.

GORDON Chris went to the West Coast. We’d done three albums together for RCA. The next record, *Are You Gonna Be the One*, in ’81, was going to be a whole different kind of album. I worked with a different producer for the first time, Lance Quinn, who is also a great guitarist who played rhythm guitar on the album alongside Danny Gatton.

I knew of Danny, but I’d never worked with him. Lance brought Danny into the project because they’d worked together before, and we hit it off immediately. He was wonderful in the studio. Nobody plays that style of music better than Danny. He was the best. Having said that, I can’t really compare him to Chris or Link, as they are all totally unique. Danny was a traditionalist, and Spedding was way more modern, which was something I really liked about Chris. He can play the roots music, but he brings his own style.

Danny would do some tricks live, but I was never a fan of him playing slide with the beer bottle [*one of Gatton’s favorite show-stopping tricks*]. I could just have kicked that out the door. I didn’t like that. Danny was great in the studio, but live he overplayed. I know that impressed some people, but not me. I really loved Danny, but I didn’t like that at all. But he was a genius, absolutely.

He got that big record deal with Elektra after working with me, but he didn’t like the corporate world, which was why he went back to working with a small independent company again after he did those two albums for Elektra. I wonder if he was a little depressed about how things went with them. They didn’t do as well as they should have. I think you really only get one shot in this business, and it’s a rough business. Danny never showed any sign of anything troubling him when we were together. That’s why it was such a shock to everyone, especially me, to hear that he’d taken his own life. I mean, I was a bad boy in the ’80s, but Danny really was not. He’d drink a beer and that would be it, but the rest of us were doing drugs and everything else. Danny wanted nothing to do with me after our time together, so 10 years went down before I talked to him again. I was a mess at the end of our touring and recording. I really needed to get off the road.

Just months before he passed, we were discussing going back into the studio together again. I was really looking forward to that, but of course it wasn’t to be.





Onstage with Danny Gatton at Berkeley Square, Berkeley, California, May 10, 1981

CLAYTON CALL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

I miss him very much. He was a wonderful guy, and he's very well respected by musicians. For guitar players everywhere, Danny will always be a hero.

QUENTIN JONES I was a huge fan of Robert's work. Guys like Wray, Spedding and Gatton were like gods to me. I never thought I'd end up playing with the man. I did two albums, *Robert Gordon*, in 1996, and *I'm Coming Home*, in 2014, which I co-produced with Robert. I was a little inexperienced when I did the first record. He really cracked the whip on that album, and I credit him for helping me develop as a player. He would say, "These are the notes that I want you to play," and he'd sing them for me. By the time of *I'm Coming Home*, things were different. Robert gave me a lot of freedom as a guitarist and a co-producer.

GORDON My new album is *Rockabilly for Life*. We released it as a 30-track set. The record company wanted to feature a special guest on each song, so we recorded 15 tracks in a raw state, with Danny B. Harvey producing and playing guitar, and then the guests replaced his guitar with their parts. I was not happy about having the guests on there at all, and I insisted that the original rough-mix tracks be part of the package, because I think they are so much better. The label chose who the guest artist would be; there's a number of them on the record that I would have never put on there. You can just buy the album for the 15 Danny B. Harvey rough-mix tracks. It's one of the best albums in my catalog.

DANNY B. HARVEY There were some great guests on the record, but Robert paid me the huge compliment of saying that he preferred my playing on the original raw tracks, which was why they ended up issuing the album with all the tracks that I played on, as well as the versions with the guests on. The brief was to get back to the raw sound of his earliest albums, which was fantastic for me, as they were so influential. Our goal was just to get that classic Robert Gordon feel. I pushed for him to sing in a higher key than he felt was natural for him, and he said he was really pleased with the results. He said, "Man, that doesn't sound like a 70 year-old on there!" [*laughs*] I think that is part of the reason why the record is redolent of the first records he cut.

GORDON There was no rockabilly revival when I broke through. There were people here and there playing it, and it was always popular in the U.K. and Europe, but it tended to be older guys, whereas I was a lot younger and had a real strong image. The Stray Cats really benefitted from the MTV age, although I think I did kick off the rockabilly revival in the U.S.

JORDI VIDAL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (ONSTAGE); KEVIN NIXON (SPEDDING)





Gordon and Spedding onstage on at Azkena Rock Festival, in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, June 26, 2010

Spedding in London, October 14, 2010

SPEDDING He really was one of the very first people to revive rockabilly, but he never really got the credit for that. I think the success of the Stray Cats a little later took the oxygen out of that. Their global success overshadowed what Robert had pioneered with Link, which is a shame.

GORDON I think, back in the day, if I'd had another couple of albums with RCA, I could've been huge. They were debating picking up my option when my manager said, "To hell with them, we'll go someplace else," and like an asshole I listened. And that was the end of my major-label contracts. I should have just stuck with RCA. I would've been there with them for MTV and had the benefit of their promotional push. I don't think I've gotten the credit that I deserve for my role in the rock and roll story. I suspect I might one day.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO TAJ

Chapter Two: From North America to Hawaii

BY JIMMY LESLIE, WITH JULES LEYHE

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY RICHMOND



FORGET THE GUY from the old Dos Equis commercials — Taj Mahal is the most interesting man in the world. When he holds court on his front porch, spinning yarns into a tapestry connecting nearly eight decades of singular experience, there's no way all that goodness is going to fit into one short feature. Last month we set the stage with the international treasure at his home in Berkeley, California, where he reflected on his remarkable career, trusty Regal resonator in hand.

Mahal can circumnavigate the globe in one lick, from its African origins to Caribbean adaptations, through the American filter and all the way to the Hawaiian Islands, where he amalgamates it all with the Hula Blues Band. He can explain each element, including subtle variations in phrasing, timing and articulation, and tell how a turnaround can vary from one locale to another. He embellishes anecdotes with affable and often hysterical imitations of everyone from a West African griot to Rastafarians, Bob Dylan and Willie Nelson, all with a generous helping of Hawaiian slang or pidgin. Mahal provides cultural context for the instruments, the music and his story.

Along the way he's developed the ability to play "nearly 20" acoustic instruments. His current ambition is to learn lap slide. At 79 years into the journey of a lifetime, he still has the zeal of a kid that just got his first guitar. Says the maestro, "I could seriously spend 10 consecutive lifetimes playing acoustic music, and still never garner all of it on this planet."

What got you going on the 12-string, which first appears along with the slide on "Stagger Lee" and "Country Blues #1" from 1969's *De Ole Folks at Home*?

That was because of Blind Willie McTell. Now, I didn't know that Lead Belly had written "Goodnight, Irene." In fact, I'd only heard the name Lead Belly; I didn't know about his connection with Pete Seeger or anything about the Weavers. [*Seeger was a Weaver when their version of "Irene" hit in 1955.*] I just liked the song. I didn't know that he played the 12-string guitar or anything about that instrument. I started hearing about the 12-string when I was 19 or 20, working on a dairy farm. A guy who came to test the cow's milk played a Lead Belly record for me, and the sound of the 12-string stuck in my head. When I finally found one in a guitar store, I realized, "This is some serious shit!" Pardon my French. Then I ran up on Blind Willie McTell — *whew!* — and Charley Lincoln and Barbeque Bob.

When Leo Kottke chronicled his 12-string roots in the Holiday 2020 Frets feature, he mentioned Barbeque Bob as well as the 12-string's mysterious origin.

Right, so then there's figuring out how Lead Belly got it. The story goes that he left Louisiana for Texas and became the lead man for Blind Lemon Jefferson. He and Jefferson went across the Mexican boarder and wound up in Nogales. Hello [*Tejano musician*] Lydia Mendoza and *guitarra de doce cuerdas*, which translates to "guitar with 12 strings."

When Kottke searched his memory, he recalled that his first instrument with coursed strings was actually a bajo sexto.

Yeah, there's bajo sexto [*a Mexican instrument with six coursed strings tuned an octave below standard, incorporating octave strings on the lower three and unisons on the upper, like a bass 12-string*], bajo quinto [*five coursed strings*], and then guitarra de doce cuerdas. And it's tuned down with the lowest string being B, E or A. [*Kottke replies: "The only thing I know of Lead Belly is that the octave on his Stella's low string was*

LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



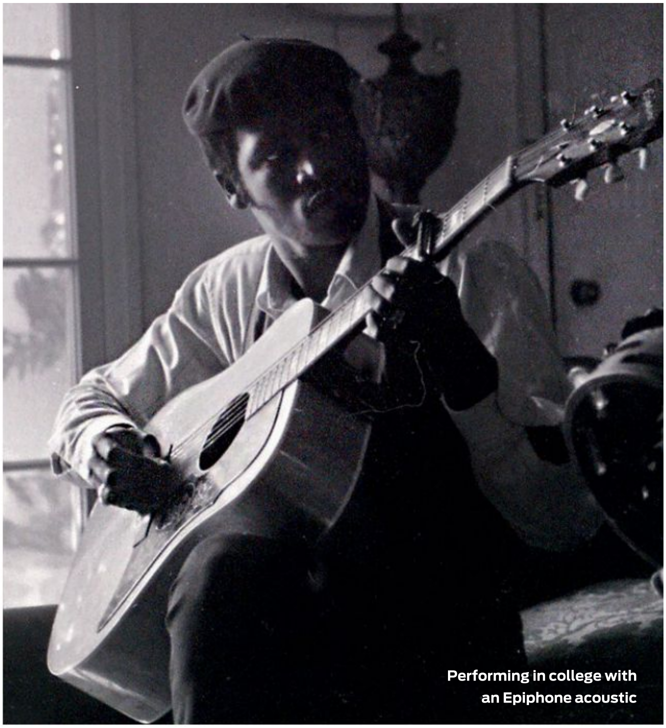
Taj Mahal on the Hendrix Experience 2019 tour, Paramount Theater in Colorado Springs, October 15, 2019

actually two octaves up. I had a chance to buy his guitar, but it scared me, so I didn't."]

So after you discover the 12-string, you get into Blind Willie McTell, and that leads to "Statesboro Blues"?
Exactly. I came from Springfield over to the University of Massachusetts when the blues was taking off in the Northeast. "Statesboro Blues" is in the American musical lexicon as a result of my finding a compilation called *The Country Blues* produced by Sam Charters [*1959, Folkways*]. A bunch of tunes from that album became staples, and I liked the way Blind Willie McTell played on "Statesboro Blues." He was a ragtime player, and McTell played the 12-string with a fingerstyle that sounded like a piano in the way he made his fingers roll through the licks. Jesse Ed Davis started out on piano, and you can hear it in the way he'd roll through guitar licks with a piano style as well.

McTell was an acoustic slide player and you famously cut a version of his "Statesboro Blues," but that's Davis playing the electric slide, correct?
Right. Jesse was the first guy I ever came across that played slide in standard tuning, which is what Muddy [*Waters*] did. Muddy did both. The way we worked was whoever played the part best got to do it. I showed Jesse the way I played it, and then he reinterpreted it his way with that [*dotted-eighth-note*] groove. At first I wasn't so sure, but I eventually realized that was the right thing to do because we took it far enough away from the older style. The rest is history.

"I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO PLAY IT LAP STYLE. I ABSOLUTELY LOVE THE SOUND"



Performing in college with an Epiphone acoustic

So then Duane Allman gets sick, drinks a bottle of Coricidin medicine, listens to your version of "Statesboro Blues" and re-invents bottleneck slide?
Well, the story is in the documentary *Muscle Shoals,* but here's my pitch on it: Gregg Allman is Duane's younger brother, who he calls "Baby Brah." Gregg convinces Duane to go horseback riding for his birthday. The guy they get the horses from says, "Look, be careful if you take the horses up on the road. They spook when they go off the dirt and onto the tarmac." So they get up there, and of course the horses spook. [*laughs*] Duane gets thrown and breaks his arm on his birthday. He's got some kind of fever, and he's pissed at baby brother for suggesting the horseback ride. He's laid up at the house. Gregg hears "Statesboro Blues" on my record [*1969's* Taj Mahal]. He gets a little grass, goes by, knocks on the door, leaves the record and runs away. Duane finds the record, figures it's Baby Brah, and a few hours later he calls Gregg: "Baby Brah, get your ass over here. You've got to hear this!" Duane is sitting up in bed with his arm in a sling so he can't… [*Mahal makes a motion like playing slide with his arm in a sling. At that moment, a crow comes heckling. Mahal heckles it right back, "Yo' mama too! And yo' other mama!"*] Anyway, so there he is with the Coricidin bottle, and that was the beginning of it. Sky Dog could play.

Do you have a slide thought to share right now?
Well, I've always played a bottleneck style, and I'd use either glass or a stainless-steel slide on a resonator, depending on the sound I'm after. But I'd like to be able to play it lap style. My next quest is to get after that, because I absolutely love the sound.

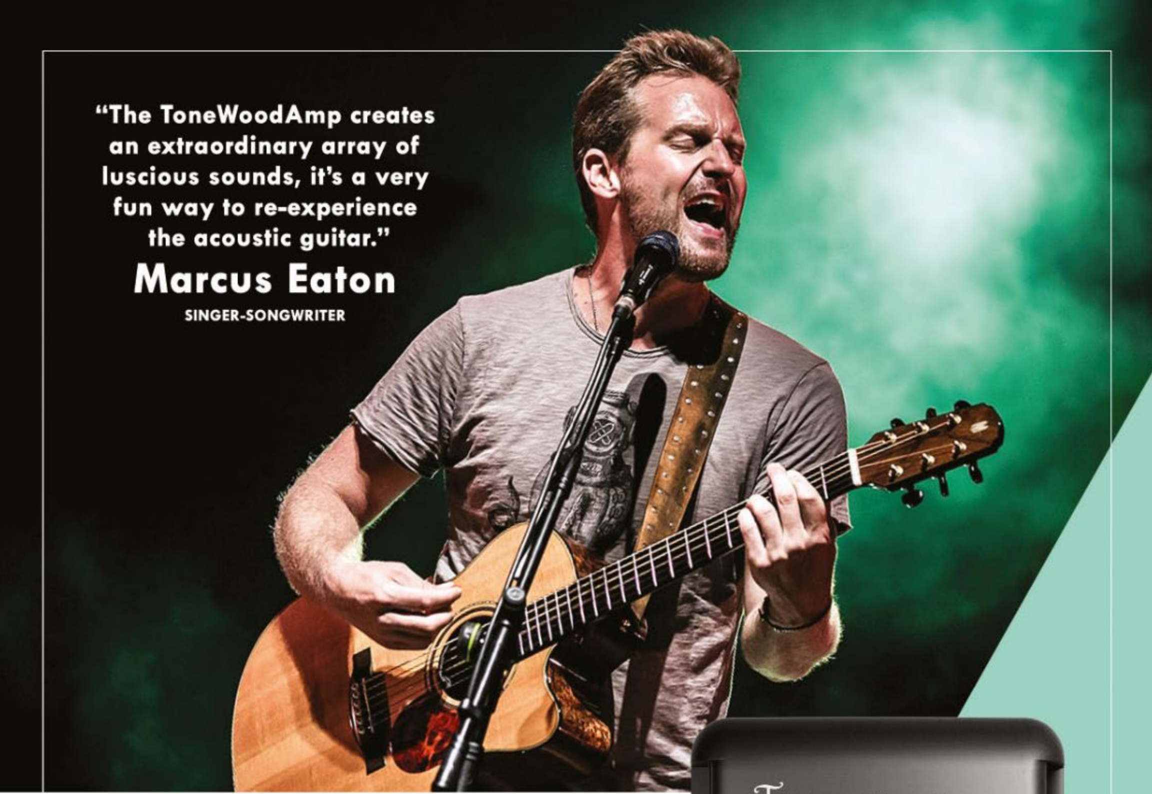


Taj onstage in 2020

Speaking of lap steel, Ben Harper was the Frets feature in the May issue. How did you come to meet and mentor him?
The first time I heard Ben Harper, I was in a house that they had actually sawed in half. [*laughs*] Anyway, we had flown in from Europe to play a concert in Claremont, California. I went upstairs and fell asleep. I awoke to the sound of a slide player taking a solo pass in a trio. I was thinking, If it sounds anything like that again, I'm going downstairs to find out who the hell this is. When I got down there, it was Ben. He said, "Sorry, we didn't mean to wake you up." Okay. Sure guys. At first I didn't realize that I knew his grandparents, who ran the Folk Music Center, but I knew Ben was going to do what he was going to do. He wasn't just playing around; he was playing music. He was filled with the spirit of it. He's also a luthier. You can drop your D-28 off a 20-story window, and he'll come sweep up the pieces and put it back together. He's *that* guy.

Harper has a profound connection to the Weissenborn and a shared appreciation for Hawaiian music. You

DR. DAVE (2020)





ToneWoodAmp
Combo Click
Hold
Click
Default
Global Settings (GS)
D.I. Mode
Lock/Unlock
Save | Load
Insert Mode
Notch Filters
Select Effect
Cut
Parameter 2
Parameter 3
Parameter 1
Freq
GS: Master Gain
Gain
D.I. Blend
FX Volume
Volume
Effects
Parameters
Amplitude
User Manual
Input
Output
Insert



Performing in 2019

went so far as to move there and develop the Hula Blues Band. What's the key to playing Hawaiian rhythms correctly?

[*He plays "The New Hula Blues."*] Once you play for hula with these very shapely women rolling on the notes, you'll get it right. But my story on Hawaiian music goes back to when I was a kid. Our shortwave/longwave radio had presets tuned to stations in cities around the world, and one was Honolulu. I remember clearly the first time I hit that button at the right time of day. I can visualize it as if I'm outside my body looking at myself standing in front of the radio. The music coming across is completely in my body, which feels like it's grounded to the Earth. Many years later in California, I ran into one John Fahey with a Weissenborn across his lap. *Hmmm.* Next, I realized there was something about a sound in country jazz that I liked, a pedal steel in C6 tuning [*C Mauna Loa*]. Then around 1979 I heard Ry Cooder with the Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band: "Moonlight Lady" blew me away. When I started getting gigs in Hawaii, I searched for the real music. I eventually discovered [*slack-key master*] Ledward Kaapana through [*steel-guitar wizard*] Bob Brozman. Ledward is a monster, but when I played with him, I found out he has no idea about what key you're playing in. He just plays music.

When I moved to Kauai, I discovered that the number of musicians per square mile in Hawaii is incredible. I started jamming with some local players, and I was surprised to find out they were into blues players like Mississippi John Hurt. We were all playing out of the same bag from a different direction. I wanted to bring out more of the Hawaiian music in the blues, and the blues in Hawaiian music.

"YOU CAN'T LOOK WHERE YOU'VE BEEN. YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO LAND"

A Hawaiian luthier named Kilin Reece schooled us in the Holiday 2019 Frets Learn column on the discovery and replication of the historic Martin Kealakai. Are you aware of that guitar?

Oh yeah, I'm working with Kilin right now. You're talking about the guitar that was the predecessor to the dreadnought. I played it and was like, "Do I need another guitar? Yes, that one!" Peter Rowan and I were just talking about that because we were over in Hawaii for a country-bluegrass thing. Hawaiian cowboys, *paniolos*, play that kind of music.

Is that where slack key comes from?

Here's some history: Mexican cowboys, *vaqueros*, were brought over to handle the cows. At night they'd break out their tequila and their guitars, and the Hawaiians would be in the bushes listening. This is how the whole paniolo thing happened. The Hawaiians didn't know how to tune the guitars. They remembered what they heard, tuned the instruments by ear, and they called it "*kī hō'alu*," meaning *slack key*. Some of them learned to play "proper" guitar in standard tuning, but most of it is in open tunings.

What's your take on the ukulele?

The ukulele is a development that came from a small Portuguese guitar, the cavaquinho. It's got metal strings and a short scale. Luthiers from the Azores, an island region of the Portuguese coast, brought this little guitar to Hawaii and started building them there. Hawaiians were delighted because music from the Portuguese islands is particularly good, and the instrument went from being steel string to nylon string. So the ukulele is a Hawaiian adaptation of the Portuguese cavaquinho.

Do you still have a house in Hawaii?

No, I moved that bunch down to New Zealand. At first they were grumbling, but when this pandemic hit that turned out to be the safest place.

What's in the works now?

I've got a ton of stuff backlogged. Right now we're trying to figure out how to come out of this thing. You can't look where you've been. You've got to look where you want to land.

AMY RICHMOND



Mike Dugan hefts a Green 1967 Galanti Grand Prix 3003.

ODD JOBS

As the caretaker for a vast collection of unusual vintage axes, blues guitarist **Mike Dugan** has carved out a second career in front of the camera.

BY TERRY CARLETON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIANE RICHTER

GO SEARCHING FOR information about 1960s-vintage oddball electric guitars and there's no doubt you'll stumble onto videos featuring Mike Dugan. From U.S. and Canadian rarities to European, Asian, Russian and Scandinavian models — Dugan has been filmed playing them all. And yet, ask him to name his favorite and, without hesitation, he names a guitar that was a first for many players of a certain age: a Sears Silvertone/Danelectro in maroon sparkle. "I actually used to go to Sears when I was 12 years old, back when you



could play the guitar in the store," he recalls. "I'd pick that baby up and plug it into the Valco-made tube amp that's built into its hard case. How can you not love that?"

While Dugan doesn't own the vast number of guitars he plays in his videos, he has the good fortune to be close friends with the man who does: Frank Meyers. In fact, Dugan is the collection's caretaker, and he comes by the job honestly. Meyers sought him out in their hometown of Allentown, Pennsylvania, when he was looking for guitar lessons. Meyers came up as a guitarist in the late-1970 and early 1980s punk scene, but when he grew frustrated with his limitations as a player later in life, he asked around to find someone who could help him advance to the next level. "Mike Dugan" was frequently the answer. The guitarist's band, Mike Dugan and the Blues Mission, had been an area favorite for some 20 years, during which time they typically played 200 to 300 gigs per year and recorded three albums of Dugan originals for Rave On Records. And, like many pro musicians, Dugan offers private lessons.

"I had known of Mike Dugan and knew him to be at the heart of the blues scene in those parts," Meyers says. "He was even semi-sorta famous, putting on concerts and such. But as a punk rocker, I hadn't started caring about that type of music or that style of guitar playing just yet." Meyers ended up studying with Dugan for more than 10 years, during which time he learned blues, theory and how to improvise.

"I'D LOOK FOR THE CHEAPEST GUITARS OUT THERE. I FOUND THESE TO BE WEIRD, INTERESTING AND EVEN ARTISTIC"
— FRANK MEYERS

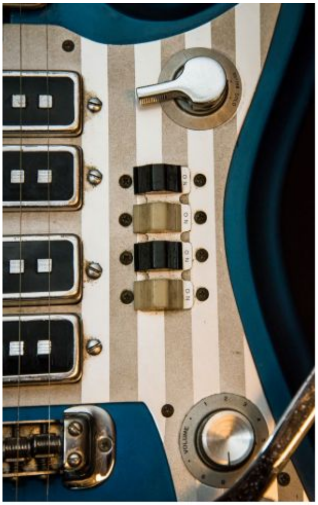
Though they came from different musical backgrounds, Meyers and Dugan shared a love of oddball vintage axes, and Meyers had the motherlode. His collection stems back to his youth in working-class Allentown. "Dad worked at the Bethlehem Steel plant, Mom was a hairdresser," he says. "We didn't have a lot of money to spend on nice stuff, so I'd look for the cheapest guitars out there." After a while, he explains, "I found these guitars to be weird, interesting and even artistic." After graduating college and getting "a stable and good-paying day job," he began buying up as many as he could. He reckons he acquired some 700 examples over the past 25 years.

But Meyers didn't just play them. He also started tearing them apart to see what made them tick. After opening up a couple dozen of these guitars, most of them made in Japan in the '60s, he began cataloging brand names and matching them to the pickups, pots and bridges. It was a trek down a rabbit hole, and it led him to write an impressive tome, *History of Japanese Electric Guitars* (published by Centerstream). Ten years ago, Meyers began to think he should create videos to demonstrate the guitars in his collection, but he wanted a totally legit guitarist to do the honors. Enter his guitar sensei and good friend Dugan. "Mike is like an incredible human jukebox," Meyers says. "He knows every song from the last several decades."

To date, they've shot more than 500 videos using guitars from Meyers' collection, with Dugan usually playing along to top-notch tracks that he tastefully matches to the guitar being demonstrated. For their demo of the Teisco B.B. King 335 model, Dugan performed to B.B. King's own backing tracks. Given his deep background as a performer, it's not surprising to learn Dugan once opened for the King of the Blues. "B.B. was such a nice man," he said. "We hung out in the dressing room, shared meals. He was a real class act."

In the 1990s, Dugan also befriended Les Paul, whom he met after Paul's rhythm guitarist, Lou Pallo, shared one of Dugan's many-layered guitar demos with the original master of multitracking. Impressed by what he heard, Les gave Dugan an open invitation to sit in with his group at the Iridium in Manhattan, where Les played every Monday night for nearly 15 years before his death in 2009. These days, Dugan performs with his partner, Jenn McCraken, in the duo Cheek2Cheek (mikedugan.com).

Dugan and Meyers kindly invited *Guitar Player* to see some of the vast collection, which we explore over the following pages. To view many more excellent examples, visit the YouTube account DrowningInGuitars, and be sure to check out Meyers' excellent and thorough cache of information and photos at drowninginguitars.com.







BLUE TEISCO K-4L, A.K.A. THE SHARKFIN

This is one of the more sought-after Japanese guitars of the ’60s. Featuring four pickups, it offers plenty of sound combinations, thanks to all those buttons and the rotary switch. Its skinny 22-fret maple neck plays fast, and it’s a good guitar for surf-style music. With distortion, it screams in a microphonic Link Wray kind of way, and it’s light and comfortable to play, thanks to the curvature of the German-style carved top and back.







GREEN MEAZZI HOLLYWOOD MUSTANG

One of Italy's lesser-known '60s offerings, the Mustang has a unique voice, thanks to its three single-coil pickups with global volume and tone knobs. The maple neck has 22 medium-jumbo frets and the feel of the larger Fender Jazzmaster, while the fully intonatable bridge has a mute that fits the palm. This was perhaps Italy's answer to the more traditional-looking Stratocaster. The open tuners have tulip-shaped buttons, much like Hofners of the period, and the chrome whammy bar is inscribed with the guitar's name.







TELE STAR DOUBLE-NECK 4 + 6

Made by Kawai in the late ’60s, this high-quality guitar has a beautiful German carved top and a 22-fret neck with distinctive block inlays. It plays nicely and offers serviceable tones akin to the average two-pickup Kawai/Teisco. The bass is a one-trick pony and, with just one pickup near the neck, doesn’t offer much tonal variance, but it does have a nice, if not basic, low-end, thumpy sound.







GREEN 1967 GALANTI GRAND PRIX 3003

Made by Galanti, a well-known accordion manufacturer in Italy, this guitar is all quality. Like so many of the ’60s Italian guitars, it has a bunch of accordion-style pushbuttons, but unlike EKO, Goya and Wandre, Galanti toned down the look of the guitar while giving it fine appointments that include Van Ghent tuners, a smooth vibrato bar and nice single-coil pickups.



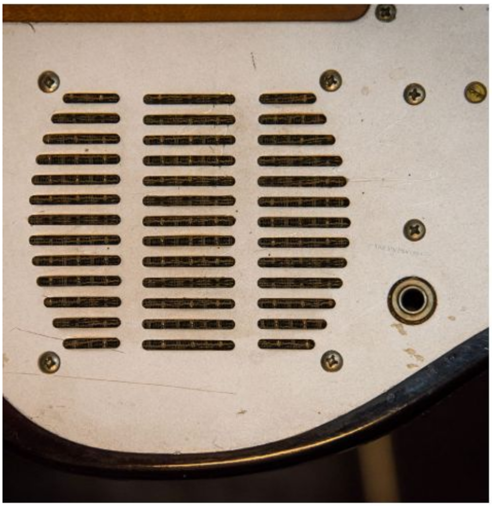




PSYCHEDELIC FLOWER ZEROSETTE JG SAD 2

Very much like the Goya Psychedelic guitar made expressly for one James Marshall Hendrix, this 1966 Italian beauty is as rare as a short jazz sax solo. Other than the finish, which is a stretched fabric under a thick clear lacquer, this is a seriously good guitar, with split-coil pickups and an appearance reminiscent of the Gibson ES-335.







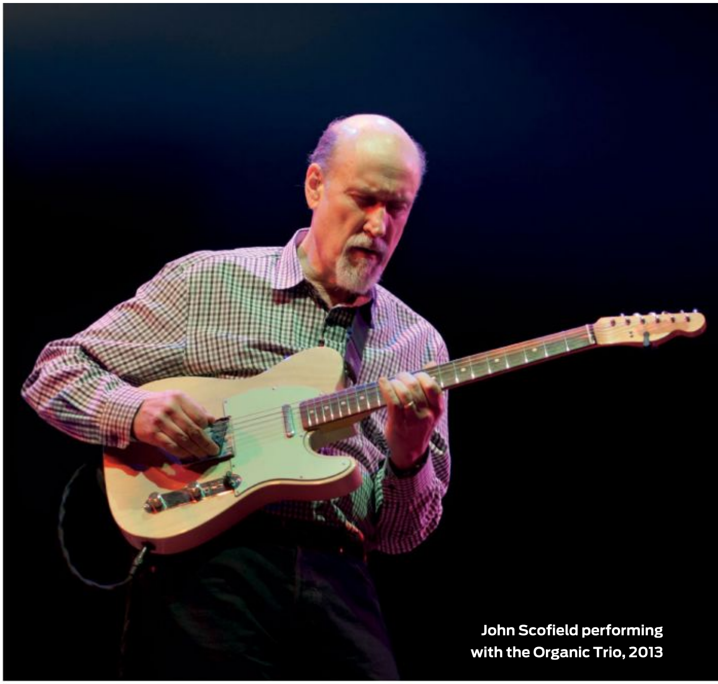
TEISCO TRE-100

Complete with a built-in one-watt amp that runs on two nine-volt batteries, the TRE-100 has a gold-foil pickup and chunky neck, similar to an old U-shaped Fender, but the action is low and surprisingly playable. This model saw use in the hands of Howlin' Wolf and is the same as Teisco's TRG-1, played by Rory Gallagher on his last studio recording, *Rattlesnake Guitar: The Music of Peter Green*.

COUNTRY JAZZ, PART 2

This month, we present the conclusion of our look at John Scofield's sophisticated reinvention of a country classic.

BY MIKE SWICKIS



John Scofield performing with the Organic Trio, 2013

ALAN JOHN AINSWORTH/HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

LAST MONTH, WE looked at the melody and form to John Scofield's instrumental cover of "Mama Tried," the popular country tune written by Merle Haggard, which Scofield recorded for his Grammy Award-winning 2016 album *Country for Old Men*. In this conclusion to our two-part lesson, we'll focus on highlights from Scofield's improvised solo and discuss how he used jazz vocabulary to imply sophisticated harmonic movement over the basic underlying chord progression.

As stated in part 1, Scofield played his arrangement in standard tuning and in the concert key of E♭. He also used a capo at the 1st fret. For purposes of this lesson, we'll forego the use of a capo and tune our guitars down a half step, to E♭ standard (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭), and think "key of E."

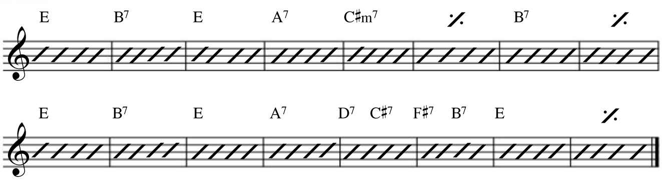
The solo is played over the repeating 16-bar chord progression that functions as the verse in the main melody section (see **Fig. 1**). Although the tune is built around basic chords, the single-note lines that Scofield plays imply more complex harmonic moves that are usually associated with jazz and bebop. In the following examples, we'll discuss a few concepts Scofield used and how they were tastefully applied to this simple form.

If you've ever played a 12-bar blues, you're familiar with the term *turnaround*. This refers to the last two bars of the repeating form, where the chord progression comes to a conclusion by setting up a compelling return to the beginning of the form. You can also find various turnarounds in other chord progressions and forms. For example, in "Mama Tried," the solo section is a repeating 16-bar form, for which the last four bars function as the turnaround. All the turnaround examples we will examine in this lesson are based on the chord progression D7 - C♯7 - F♯7 - B7, which cycles back to the I chord, E.

It's important to note that the lines John played over the turnaround often imply added harmonic extensions on top of the basic chord structure, which is why I have included the names of the "implied" chords above the staff in each of the following examples. Try using a looper pedal to record the implied chords, or have someone accompany you, so that you can hear how the single-note lines effectively describe the more complex implied harmony.

If you're playing with a bass player and no other chord instrument, he or she can play the root notes to the basic country changes and you can play all of these fancy licks over top without any problems, and it will sound cool. However, if you do have a chord instrument playing with you, the fancy stuff might make more sense to your ears if the person accompanying you

Fig. 1



MORE ONLINE!

For audio of this lesson, go to **guitarplayer.com/sept21-lesson1**

reinforces the implied chord changes. I recommend experimenting with both approaches and comparing the difference between them.

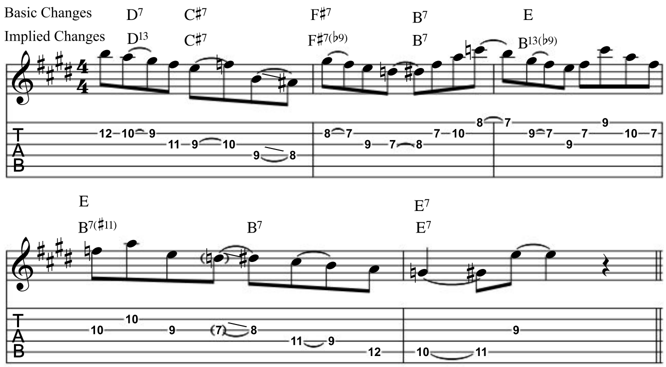
The first turnaround we'll examine is shown in **Ex. 6** and occurs in the last four bars of Scofield's first solo chorus (0:55–1:01) The first half of the line cycles through the progression D13 - C♯7 - F♯7♭9 - B7. This is basically the same progression as D7 - C♯7 - F♯7 - B7 but with some implied harmonic extensions on the D7 and F♯7 chords. If you ever have to solo over a fast tune with chords that change at the rate of two to a bar, you can simplify things by addressing only the second chord in each bar. For instance, in the first bar of this turnaround, we have D13 to C♯7, which can be simplified to C♯7, in terms of what chord to target. And in the bar that follows, we have F♯7♭9 to B7, which likewise can be reduced to one bar of B7. In other words, we have simplified the solo changes to one bar of C♯7 followed by a bar of B7. On C♯7, John plays notes from the C♯ Mixolydian mode (C♯, D♯, E♯, F♯, G♯, A♯, B) with the passing tones A (the ♭6) and E (the ♭3) added. The A falls on an upbeat of beat 1 and serves as a lead-in note, whereas the E falls on the downbeat of beat 3 and resolves to the major 3rd of the C♯7 chord, E♯ (written here as F).

Scofield takes a similar approach with the B7 chord that follows in the second bar, this time using notes from B Mixolydian (B, C♯, D♯, E, F♯, G♯, A) with the passing tones G (the ♭6), and D (the ♭3), where the G is a lead-in note and the D resolves to D♯, the major 3rd of B7. Notice in the last two bars of this example where the basic changes suggest an E chord while the implied changes indicate B7. This is because this line implies a continuation of the B7 chord from the previous bar, which creates a delayed resolution to the E chord at the end of the phrase.

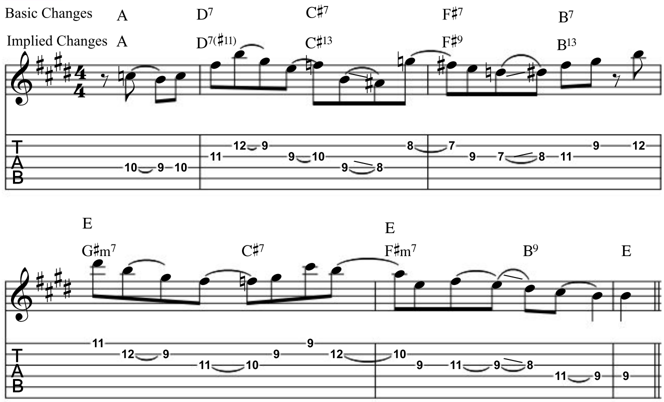
Ex. 7 illustrates what John plays over the four-bar turnaround that occurs at the end of his second solo chorus (1:13–1:18). Like the previous example, it implies some different extensions to the basic turnaround chords. The first half of the line, played over the basic turnaround D7 - C♯7 - F♯7 - B7, implies extensions that suggest D7♯11 - C♯13 - F♯9 - B13. Just like in the previous example, we can reduce the two chords in each bar to one for a simpler analysis. In the first bar of this turnaround, we have D7♯11 to C♯13, which can be simplified to C♯13 and in the measure that follows, we have F♯9 to B13, which likewise can be approached as if it were one bar of B13. In other words, we have simplified the solo changes to one bar of C♯13 followed by a bar of B13. One way to explain this line is to say he's playing C♯ Mixolydian notes with an E passing tone over C♯13 and then B Mixolydian with a D passing tone over B13.

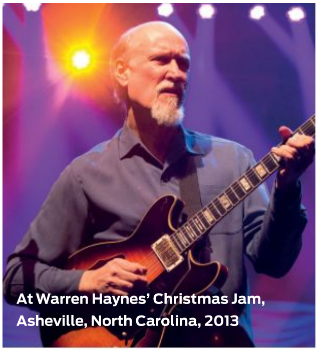
The next two bars of Ex. 7 are played over the changes G♯m7 - C♯7 - F♯m7 - B9. This presents another opportunity to reduce two chords in a bar to one. In this case, G♯m7 to C♯7 can be reduced to C♯7, and F♯m7 to B9 can be reduced to B9. Once the chord progression is simplified in this way, it becomes easier to see that this line contains notes from C♯ Mixolydian for a bar over C♯7, followed by B Mixolydian on the bar of B9.

Ex. 6 (0:55-1:01)



Ex. 7 (1:13-1:18)

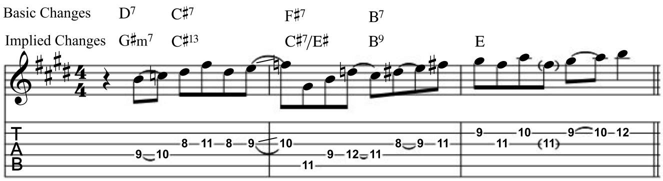




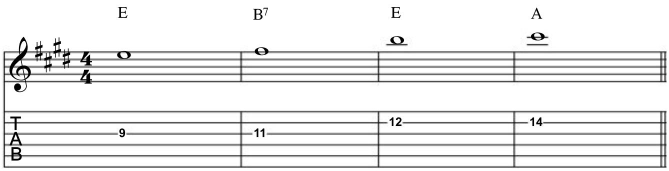
At Warren Haynes' Christmas Jam, Asheville, North Carolina, 2013

ALICIA FUNDERBURK/GETTY IMAGES

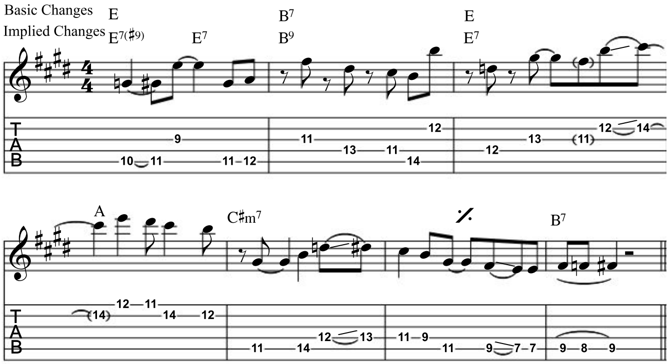
Ex. 8 (1:48-1:51)



Ex. 9a



Ex. 9b (1:00-1:07)



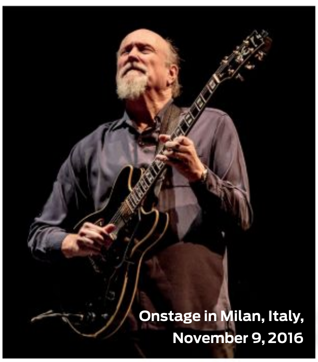
The third turnaround phrase we'll look at utilizes a different approach than the previous two. The lick shown in **Ex. 8** occurs at the end of John's fourth solo chorus (1:48–1:51) and implies the progression G♯m7 - C♯13 - C♯7/E♯ - B9. Notice that the turnaround progression is mostly the same except for the C♯/E♯. If you listen carefully to the recording, you'll hear that there is a strong F (E♯) in the bass, which suggests that this chord is not the expected F♯7 but rather a C♯7 with its 3rd in the bass. All of the melody notes used in the line are in the key of E, with the exception of the C natural in the first bar and F natural in bar 2. The C natural could be considered either a chromatic passing tone or the ♭7 on the D7 chord in the cycle. The F natural (E♯) functions as a targeted major 3rd of C♯7 that's approached by two chromatic pitches below it. Even though these passing notes are not diatonic to the key of E, they can be justified in that they directly correspond to the chords that are played in the cycle.

When soloing over chord changes, an effective improvisational strategy is to aim for specific chord tones to land on in advance, in order to give your lines a strong sense of direction. This can be done by using chord tones for the target notes and placing them on the strong downbeats rather than the weak upbeats. In the next featured excerpt from John's solo, we have a long phrase that uses chord tones as target notes on the downbeats in an ascending line in the key of E. Here, the main target notes are E on the E major chord, F♯ on the B7, B on the next E major and C♯ on the A major. If you take a second to play these target tones as basic whole notes over each chord, you can really hear how the line has a simple, almost nursery rhyme-like quality (see **Ex. 9a**). The line comes to life in **Ex. 9b** (1:00–1:07), where Scofield adds notes around the target tones that "decorate" them, resulting in a sophisticated lick with a target line on top and a decoration line on the bottom. The last part of this example concludes with a call-and-response-type line in E major over the last four bars.

Our next example demonstrates Scofield's use of the half-whole diminished scale, which, as its name indicates, follows a formula of alternating half steps and whole steps. Among jazz musicians, this is a favorite scale to play over dominant 7th chords, and it has been used extensively by many of the greats, such as John Coltrane, Allan Holdsworth and many others. In

Ex. 10 (1:07–1:09), we see a short, two-bar lick that Scofield plays over the V (five) chord, B7, which effectively describes a B7♯9♭9 chord sound via the use of notes from the B half-whole diminished scale (B, C, D, D♯, F, F♯, G♯, A). Notice how the scale includes the foundational chord tones of B7 (B, D♯, F♯ and A), as well as the extensions ♭9 and ♯9 (C and D, respectively). This short idea makes for a colorful and interesting phrase, and it's an example of one of John's signature moves that he has used in other solos. Experiment by altering the rhythm, or try doubling the length of the phrase by repeating it up an octave, as indicated in Ex. 10b.

The altered scale is another popular scale that can add tension to your lines when playing on dominant chords. Also known as the diminished whole-tone scale and the super-Locrian mode, the altered scale is the 7th mode of the melodic minor scale and includes the altered chordal tensions ♭9, ♭5, ♯9 and ♯5. In **Ex. 11**, we have an idea from bars 7 and 8 of John's third solo chorus (1:24–

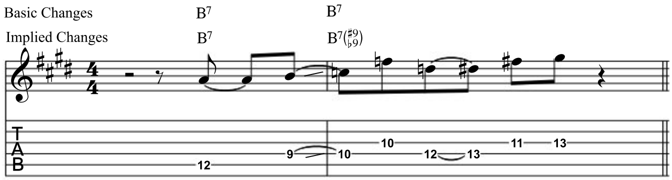

Onstage in Milan, Italy, November 9, 2016

SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

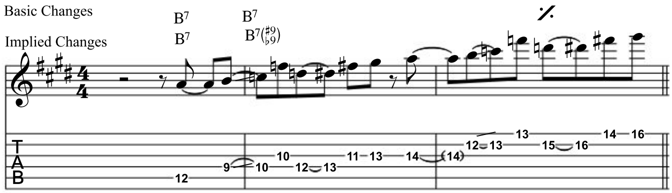
1:26), where he uses the B altered scale (B, C, D, E♭, F, G, A) over a B7♯5 chord. Notice how most of this lick consists of simply playing down the scale beginning on E♭/D♯ and descending until landing on, F — E♭, D, C, B, A, G, F. The tension within this lick is particularly effective due to the fact that it is placed at the end of the phrase, where the harmony leads back to E major. This is a good place to experiment using altered sounds because the altered extensions feel less out of place where tension is desired. I recommend recording the chords and playing this line over them in order to get a feel for the way the harmony resolves from B7♯5 to E.

In **Ex. 12**, we have another line based on the altered scale, which John played in bars 7 and 8 of his fifth solo chorus (1:58–2:01). Like the previous example, this lick uses the B altered scale and offers a good musical demonstration of a descending line that outlines a B7 altered-dominant chord resolving to E. When experimenting with this scale, keep in mind that the altered sound is quite dissonant. As such, it may require restraint and discretion in order for it to be most effective.

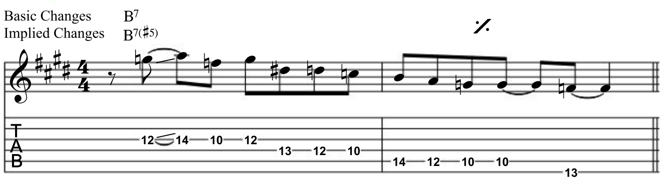
Ex. 10a (1:07-1:09)



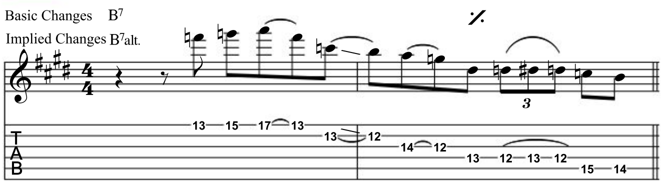
Ex. 10b

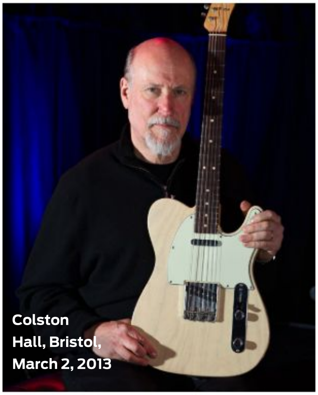


Ex. 11 (1:24-1:26)



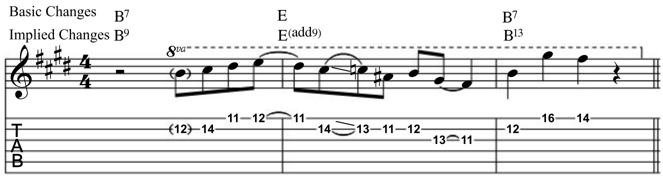
Ex. 12 (1:58-2:01)



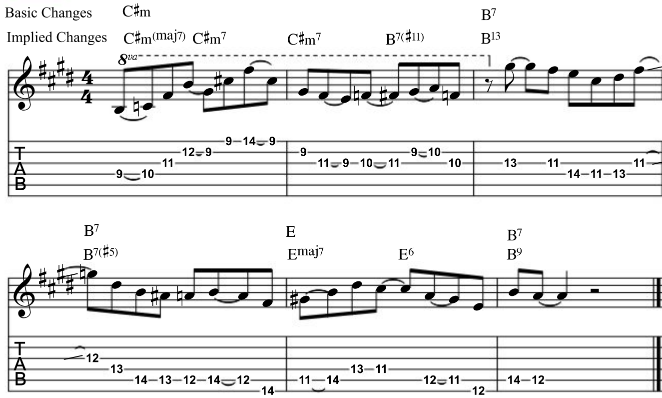


Colston Hall, Bristol, March 2, 2013

Ex. 13 (1:34-1:37)



Ex. 14 (1:39-1:45)



Many jazz improvisers deliberately manipulate specific chromatic passing tones in their lines to create bebop sounds. Take a look at **Ex. 13**, which begins at the top of Scofield's fourth solo chorus (1:34–1:37) and includes notes from the E major scale (E, F♯, G♯, A, B, C♯, D♯), with ♭6 and ♭5 passing tones, respectively C and B♭ (notated as A♯). The chromaticism that is created by adding these notes allows for what is known as *enclosure* in bebop music. In this case, the target note, B, is first approached by C♯, C natural and B♭. Instead of just playing the note B, we can decorate it, or "dance around it" by approaching it with neighboring chromatic pitches. One could say that these notes "enclose" the target note since the pitches move chromatically around the destination note, both above and below it, before landing on it. This type of deliberate chromaticism is commonly found in the bebop vocabulary and can be heard in many jazz melodies and solos.

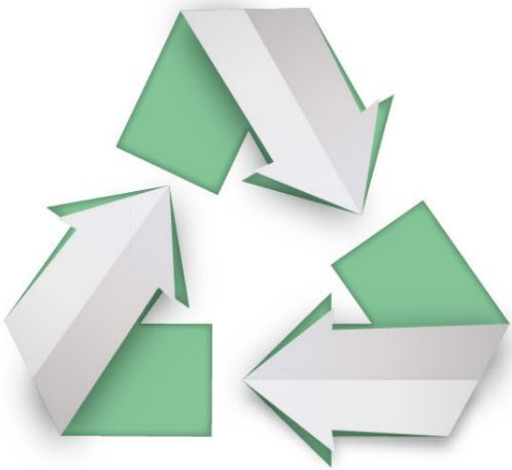
Exploring various interval combinations in your single-note lines can be a great way to help you break away from old patterns and create new sounds. The first half of the lick in **Ex. 14** begins at the 5th bar of the fourth solo chorus (1:39–1:45) and is a cool example of interval combinations that yield a fresh sound and an interesting melodic contour. The first part of this example is played over C♯m and begins with a minor 2nd interval (B to C), followed by a tritone (C to F♯), a 4th (F♯ to B), a minor 3rd (B to G♯) and two more 4ths (G♯ to C♯ to F♯). Notice how the frequent use of ascending 4ths creates a spacey, "open" sound, which gives us a different result than your typical minor pentatonic blues lick.

The second half of this line is played over B7 and is a great example of a bebop line that resolves from the V7 chord to the I (B7 to E) at the end of a phrase. Most of the notes Scofield plays over B7 here are from B Mixolydian, but there are also a couple of additional passing tones. The first occurs in bar 4, where he slides up to a G natural on beat 1, which creates a B7♯5 sound. The second passing tone is the A♯ that's added to the line midway through bar 4. Since the line is played over B7, this chromatic passing note may be considered to be part of the B bebop scale, which, ascending, is spelled B, C♯, D♯, E, F♯, G♯, A, A♯, and is the same as B Mixoloydian but with an added A♯.

I hope you enjoyed these lessons. I highly recommend having a listen to both the Merle Haggard and John Scofield versions of "Mama Tried" for context, inspiration and enjoyment. Remember to practice improvising with a looper or another guitarist and begin by soloing on the basic changes. Once you have a feel for the tune, try improvising on the implied changes and plug in some of the examples presented in this lesson. As you become more familiar with these ideas, see if you can create some of your own variations that can be applied to other progressions.

Finally, visit GuitarPlayer.com to find my full transcription of Scofield's recorded arrangement of the melody and his complete solo.

DAVID CAUDERY



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Stageworthy Strategies, Pt. 4

The art of applying acoustic effects.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

WHEN IT COMES to effects, acoustic-electric players generally fall into three categories: purists who eschew them, dabblers who are open to possibilities and gear heads who are into full-on processing. If you use effects at all, it's important that you apply quality sounds artistically and judiciously. The primary acoustic effects are chorus, delay and reverb, and while many modern acoustic amps offer them onboard, we'll focus on pedals here and look at amps next time.

GET YOUR EFFECTS IN ORDER

Chorus can add depth and sparkle. Put the chorus first (after compression or gain) following the cardinal rule of modulation before time-based effects. A nice tight chorus applied at a generous depth can provide a decent approximation of a 12-string. Add the upper element of an octave pedal to make it more convincing. A wider chorus will add a watery texture, but don't slather on so much chorus that the dry glory of the wood gets lost in a flood.

Delay and reverb are time-based effects and are ideal for adding ambiance. Think of delay as extra hits of a particular sound. Put the pedal after modulation effects and before reverb, with its potentially long tail. Reverb is the last in line as it puts everything in a new space that can be as small as a room or as huge as a stadium. Put acoustic effects in an effects loop if one is available on the amp or D.I. pedal to keep the tone as tidy as possible.

STIR IT UP

Mixing up effects keeps tone interesting over the course of a gig. Take the chorus away for some songs, and change the rate and depth for others. Consider using two reverb pedals the way acoustic solo act Christie Lenée does, with one set short and another long so she can quickly click them on or off rather than interrupt the show to tweak a single unit. Use two reverbs individually for different types of tunes, or together for a more prominent overall effect. I do a similar thing, utilizing a short reverb provided by the amp in conjunction with a lush, spacious pedal reverb for slower songs. Customizing delay tempos to tunes is also crucial. A delay with tap tempo capability is awesome for live applications when it's not practical to bend down and adjust timing.



L.R. Baggs' Align Reverb is designed with acoustic players in mind

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Extension and expression pedals are a live processor's best buddies. Many pedals feature extended I/O for connecting a tap/toggle footpedal that can control delay tempo or chorus rate. Expression pedals can expand capability tremendously and allow unique real-time control of everything from chorus depth to reverb size or rate of decay on a delay. This is where effects processing becomes an art form. And in live art, real-time expression is everything.

Pro pedalboards are often configured with expression and extension foot controllers prominent, and with effects set up to let the foot controllers take precedence for performance. The actual pedals are frequently housed in a rack or cabinet sitting side stage. A volume pedal is simply a dedicated expression pedal, and it's always a good idea to have one handy to home in on overall level for a particular part, or back off quickly in the case of a random feedback attack.

ON THE MODERN MARKET

Myriad modern modulation and time-based effects are expanding horizons immensely for the acoustic effects enthusiast. Eventide's MicroPitch Delay blurs the line between the two camps, earning an Editors' Pick in the July issue. On the very next page editor-in-chief Christopher Scapelliti reviewed Earthquaker's new Astral Destiny and noted, "Earthquaker Devices has made uncommon reverbs a specialty of its extensive pedal line." Strymon is another such manufacturer embraced by acoustic gurus such as Kaki King for expansive pedals such as the BigSky reverb. King now swears by her laptop rig based on Apple's MainStage software, and we're certainly entering an era when that won't be at all weird.

There is another trend toward pedals designed specifically with the acoustic player in mind. L.R. Baggs entered the effects pedal arena in 2018 with the Align Series, and its Reverb and Delay pedals earned Editors' Pick Awards. Fender introduced the stage-friendly Acoustic Preverb preamp and reverb pedal last fall and is developing an entire acoustic-oriented range. Meanwhile, Universal Audio introduced its UAFX pedals, designed to bring studio-quality ambiance and modulation to the stage.

It's obvious that there has never been a better time to get into acoustic-electric effects. As we emerge from the pandemic and move into a new era of performance, take the opportunity to explore how they can spice up your live tone.

K-LINE Springfield

Guitar Player Editors' Pick

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

IT SOMETIMES SEEMS like everybody and his cousin is making quality reproduction bolt-neck S- and T-style guitars. Yet when you get your hands on a great one, the results can be eye-opening and strangely enlivening. While I admit to feeling jaded sometimes, this K-Line Springfield arrived like a Lake Placid Blue bolt from the great beyond to remind me how inspiring the 67-year-old design remains, especially when it's well put together and thoughtfully updated to suit the needs of contemporary players without watering down the vintage-correct tone and vibe.

Chris Kroenlein began making his K-Line guitars as a sideline in 2004, buying bodies and necks from a third-party supplier. Since around 2010, however, he has put his considerable woodworking skills to good use. Today, his guitars' bodies and necks, along with roughly 95 percent of the total components, are fabricated in-house, an effort that includes pickup winding. Outwardly, the Springfield looks much like you'd expect a guitar built in line with the early '60s Stratocaster template to look. But once you apply the kind of minute consideration to every aspect of the build, as Kroenlein clearly does, the results soar beyond the general archetype.

As Kroenlein tell us, it all begins with the wood. "Specifically dry, resonant wood," he says. "I hand select it based on moisture content, and I spend a bit extra to get the driest wood possible." After that, he says, it's down to "hardware that performs as needed, quality pickups and electronics, paying attention to the fit and finish, and the little things: a nice hand-rolled fretboard edge, saddle screws that aren't sticking up out of the saddle too much, and proper neck-pocket angles to ease the setup and feel."

The wood in this case includes an alder body and a maple neck with a chocolatey dark rosewood fingerboard that features appealing dark-red striping in the grain. If the finished guitar's seven-pound total weight and lively, ringing acoustic response are anything to go by, Kroenlein has certainly selected them well and carved them just right. The neck sports a rounded "C" profile that measures .850 inch deep at the first fret. It's extremely comfortable in the hand, thanks to the combination of those rolled fingerboard edges and the thin, tactile French-polish technique Kroenlein uses on its back, which emulates a well-worn vintage nitro finish.

The body itself is shot in nitrocellulose lacquer in a beautiful Lake Placid Blue, and gently aged with checking,

SPECIFICATIONS

Springfield
CONTACT k-lineguitars.com
PRICE $2,650 direct

NUT WIDTH 1.650" bone
NECK Maple, medium "C" profile (.850" at 1st fret)
FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 10" radius
FRETS 21 medium (6125)
TUNERS Vintage-style
BODY Solid alder
BRIDGE 6-saddle/6-screw Wilkinson vibrato with push-in arm and staggered string holes
PICKUPS Three hand-wound K-Line '64 single-coil Strat-style pickups
CONTROLS Master volume, tone for neck and middle, tone for bridge
FACTORY STRINGS Curt Mangan .010–.046
WEIGHT 7 lbs
BUILT USA

KUDOS A top-flight S-style guitar with vintage leanings but cleverly updated to suit the modern player. Superb playing feel and compelling tone
CONCERNS It will be pricey for some budgets, though it's still much less than many high-end boutique makes.



PHOTOS BY JEN GRAY







dings and scuffs to emulate a road-worn guitar. I also appreciate little cosmetic touches, like the rounded edges of the pickup covers, the yellowing of the pickguard, and the soft patina of the hardware and screws, all appearing very accurate and natural. (Non-aged finishes and parts are available as well.) Hardware includes a six-screw Wilkinson vibrato that boasts vintage styling, with contemporary updates such as a wobble-free push-in arm, staggered string holes for improved intonation and tension, and vintage Kluson-style tuners. Pickups are K-Line's '64 single-coil Strat-style set, measuring in the low 6k-ohms range, with a hot bridge pickup that's wired to its own tone control. The neck and middle pickups share the other tone control.

I tested the Springfield through a tweed Deluxe-inspired 1x12 combo, a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cab, and a Neural DSP Quad Cortex modeler into studio monitors, and found it to be a great and inspiring S-style guitar by any measure. It's hard not to harbor some love of the design, as iconic as it is in the history of the electric guitar and rock music, in general. But I've often had something of a love-hate relationship with the Strat, sometimes finding the hardware clunky and awkward, and the tones too thin and bright to work for me, no matter how much great music others have managed to make with the guitar. Not so in this case. Far from it, in fact. It's noteworthy that, although it wasn't yet this guitar's turn in the review queue, I couldn't stop picking it up and playing it the day after it arrived. By sundown it was still in tune, and I realized I hadn't twisted a single tuner since I pulled it out of the case.

The Springfield's playability is so good as to dispel all previous reservations. There were no strings dropping off fretboard edges, no sharp saddle adjustment screws, and no buzzing hardware or dead spots. What's more, the tone was both archetypally Stratty and appealingly trenchant and inspiring. It's bright, glassy, snappy and quacky, yes, but also muscular, rich, multidimensional and compelling. It's the first Strat-style guitar I've played in a long while that I felt could easily step in when my Les Paul broke a string midsong, for example, while still hanging in for the next tune that required a mix of gnarly Tele-like twang leads and clean rhythm jangle. Through my testing, the Springfield kept on inspiring that gut instinct a player gets that declares, "This is just a great guitar!"

There are other high-end makers out their pursuing the T- and S-style formulae to produce guitars that sell for two and three times the cost of this K-Line, not to mention Fender's own venerable Custom Shop offerings. I've played plenty of them, and while many have been outstanding, I really don't feel that any have been demonstrably better than this guitar. Sometimes you just have to forget the price tag — and maybe the brand name as well — to make a truly objective evaluation about a piece of gear, but when you're a little shocked to learn that this guitar doesn't cost $5,000 or more, that's really saying something. For that, and for its all-encompassing delightfulness, the K-Line Springfield earns an Editors' Pick Award.

GRETSCH

G2627T Streamliner

TESTED BY MICHAEL ROSS

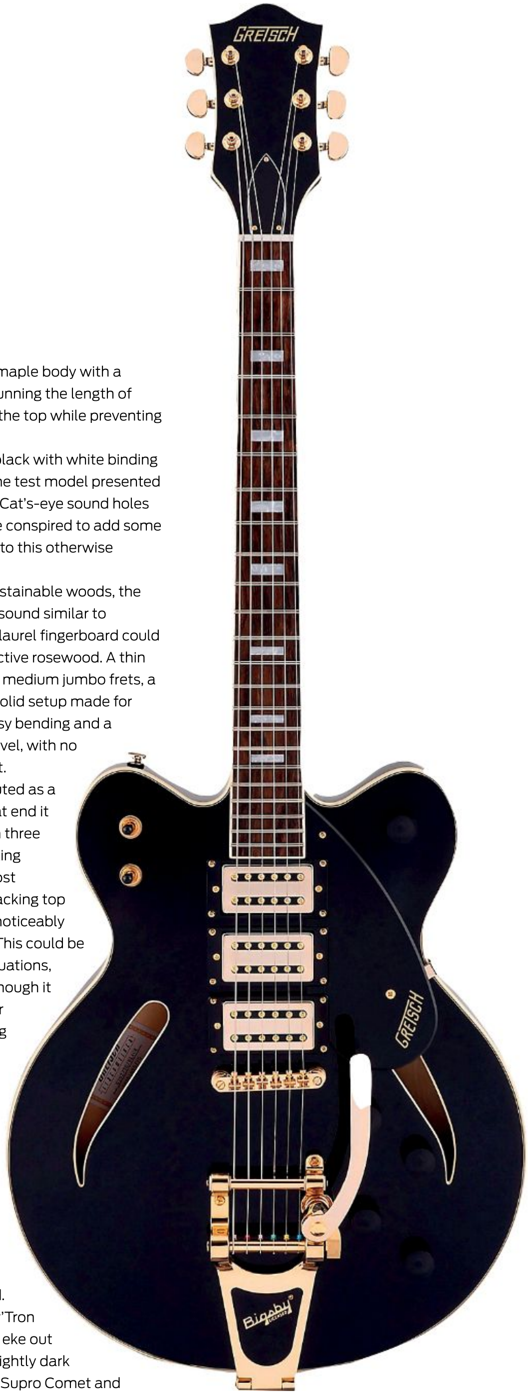
GRETSCH HAS BEEN peppering the market with a plethora of models in the past few years. The Streamliner series offers a center-block version for players who desire some acoustic attitude but also want to crank the volume and/or distortion level without uncontrollable feedback. To that end, the G2627T (which is available only through Guitar Center and Musician's Friend) sports a semihollow maple body with a spruce center block running the length of the body to reinforce the top while preventing nasty howling.

Finished in gloss black with white binding and gold hardware, the test model presented a classy appearance. Cat's-eye sound holes and a Bigsby tailpiece conspired to add some vintage Gretsch style to this otherwise modern update.

Constructed of sustainable woods, the nato neck provides a sound similar to mahogany, while the laurel fingerboard could be mistaken for attractive rosewood. A thin U-shape neck profile, medium jumbo frets, a 12-inch radius and a solid setup made for superb playability, easy bending and a comfortable action level, with no buzzing or fretting out.

The G2627T is touted as a rock beast, and to that end it comes equipped with three Broad'Tron humbucking pickups, Gretsch's most powerful. While not lacking top end, the pickups are noticeably boosted in the bass. This could be a plus in high-gain situations, mitigating fizziness, though it might be less ideal for those seeking a twang machine. That said, their extra output meant I could lower them well away from the strings, which simultaneously increased their clarity and moved them (especially the middle one) away from my picking hand. While still not in Filter'Tron territory, I was able to eke out some rich, rootsy, if slightly dark tones through both a Supro Comet and





SPECIFICATIONS

G2627T Streamliner
CONTACT gretschguitars.com
PRICE $499-$599 street depending on model/color

NUT WIDTH 1.69"
NECK 24.75" Nato U-shape neck fingerboard with 12" radius
FRETBOARD Laurel, 24.75" scale, 12" radius
FRETS 22 medium-jumbo
TUNERS Die-cast
BODY Maple body with lightweight spruce center block
BRIDGE Adjusto-matic bridge and Bigsby B70 tailpiece
PICKUPS 3 Gretsch Broad'Tron humbuckers
CONTROLS Two 3-way switches; neck, middle, and bridge volumes; master tone.
BUILT Indonesia

KUDOS Easy to play. Wide range of sounds. Bang for the buck
CONCERNS Pickups a little dark sounding



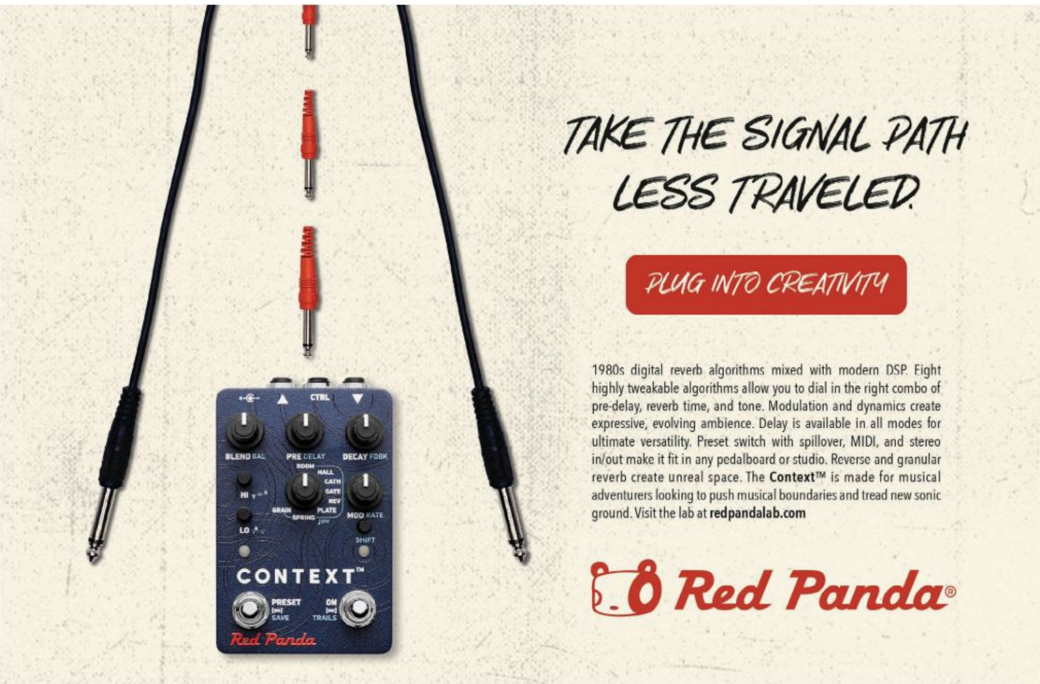


a Fender Blues Junior. Once distortion entered the picture, courtesy of a Jetter Jetdrive or added amp volume, the Broad'Trons came into their own, easily driving both pedals and amps, and sounding full, but not muddy.

The pickup switching system and controls took some getting used to, but once mastered they offered an extensive variety of tones. One of the three-way toggles handles the neck and bridge in classic fashion: neck, bridge or both. The second three-way controls the middle pickup, one position shutting it off for standard two-pickup operation; a second for combining with neck, bridge or both; and a third to turn it on while shutting off the other two pickups. This last setting proved to be surprisingly useful, whether for slide or paired with mild distortion for some atmospheric ambience.

The knobs offer individual volumes for each pickup, a master tone and a master volume. The G2627T is wired such that turning any pickup all the way off shuts down all sound, even when combined with another pickup. This allows classic stutter effects, but it also means you have to be careful when making fine adjustments to multi-pickup configurations.

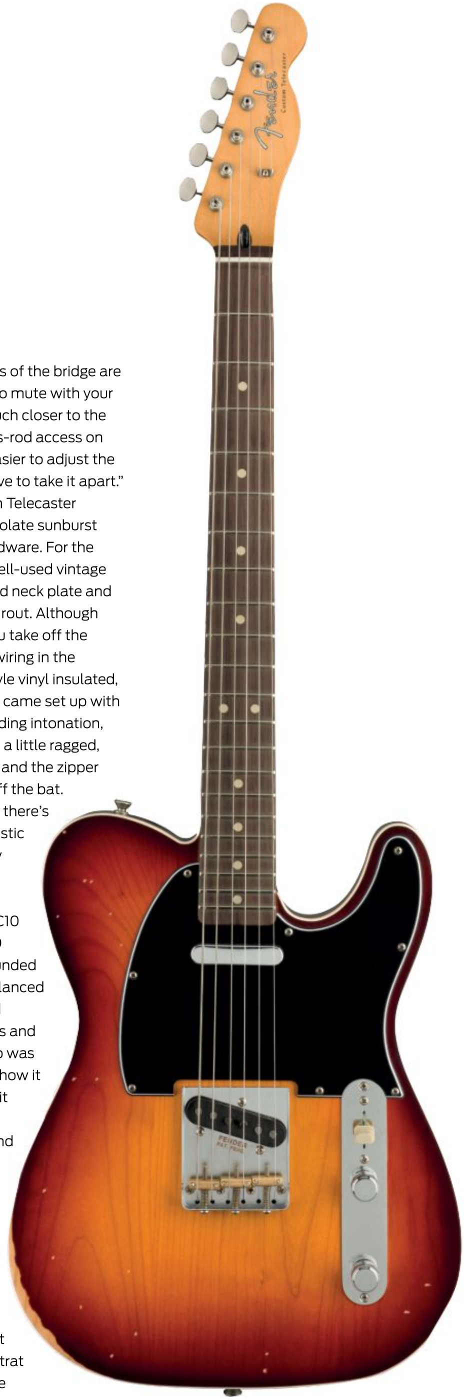
For much of its history, Gretsch meant mostly Chet Atkins fingerstyle, Cliff Gallup rockabilly or Duane Eddy twang. These days, the company is bringing the legacy of Neil Young's slashing solos and the chunky rock rhythms of Billy Duffy and Malcom Young to the fore. Though the G2627T emphasizes the latter, it may still be worth checking out even if you are into the former.



FENDER

Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON



TELECASTERS WITH CUSTOMIZED hardware, electronics, finishes and so on have been a big part of Fender's product line for years. The Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster is the latest model to be hybridized by mixing components from different eras, while also bringing all-new elements into the mix when deemed necessary by Isbell and the Fender design team. "I went with a few different Teles I really like and sort of put together my favorite features of each one for this guitar," says the guitarist/singer/songwriter and beacon of the Americana scene. "I liked the look of the double-bound body on my Tele Custom from '59 or '60, and I have a Custom Shop version of it that I put a black pickguard on. We went with those things purely for the look. We also used a traditional bridge with brass saddles, but the edges of the bridge are cut away to make it easier to mute with your right hand and play that much closer to the saddles. We also put a truss-rod access on the headstock to make it easier to adjust the neck, because you don't have to take it apart."

The Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster features a Road Worn Chocolate sunburst lacquer finish and aged hardware. For the most part, it resembles a well-used vintage Tele, except for the engraved neck plate and aforementioned headstock rout. Although not readily visible unless you take off the chromed switch plate, the wiring in the control cavity is modern-style vinyl insulated, not cloth-covered. The JICT came set up with low action and sweet-sounding intonation, however, the fret ends were a little ragged, the nut corners were sharp, and the zipper on the gig bag failed right off the bat. Otherwise, it plays well and there's plenty to like about its acoustic tone, which rings out clearly and has good sustain.

Plugged into a Fender Deluxe Reverb and a Vox AC10 C1, and with a Fulltone OCD pedal for grind, the JICT sounded deep and rich and had a balanced presentation of fatness and top-end bite. The brightness and presence of the neck pickup was immediately noticeable for how it stands on its own and how it combines with the bridge pickup to deliver an open and articulate sound.

"The neck pickup is basically a Twisted Tele, but it breaks up a little quicker than they have in the past," Isbell explains. "Tim Shaw [*Fender's chief engineer*] has been working on that pickup design, and it sounds a little more like a Strat pickup, which makes it more

SPECIFICATIONS

Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster
CONTACT fender.com
PRICE $1,499 street, gig bag included

NUT WIDTH 1.65" synthetic bone
NECK Maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 7.25" radius
FRETS 21 Vintage Tall
TUNERS Vintage style
BODY Alder
BRIDGE String-through-body Tele with brass saddles
PICKUPS Specially voiced Jason Isbell Telecaster single-coils
CONTROLS Volume, tone, three-way selector,
FACTORY STRINGS Fender 250R Nickel Plated Steel .010–.046
WEIGHT 7.62 lbs (as tested)
BUILT Mexico

KUDOS A great-sounding Tele, with a distinctive look
CONCERNS Fret ends are prickly. Selector button slips off easily when flicking the switch. Gig bag is not up to par







useful and musical to me. In fact, I could play this guitar on the neck pickup and convince people that it was a Stratocaster. One of the things about a Telecaster that didn't lend itself to my style of playing was that the traditional neck pickup is much darker. I like that sound, but it wasn't as useful to me as something that was a little more scooped and had more high-end bite. It handles the fuzz pedal well and just makes a lot of sense, because it gives you an option you haven't typically had with a Telecaster."

The Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster certainly delivers enough clarity and punch in the neck setting to deploy it as an alternate texture for rhythm and lead work, and it brings more girth and sparkle to the dual-pickup position. Coupled with the excellent bridge pickup, this new signature Telecaster gives country-rockers a potent new weapon that looks as cool as it sounds. It's great that Fender is still coming up with ways to improve one of the greatest electric guitars ever made, and the fact that the JICT is priced within reach of working players should make Jason Isbell feel pretty stoked about his new signature Tele.



FENDER

Guitar Player Editors' Pick

Dhani Harrison Signature Ukulele

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

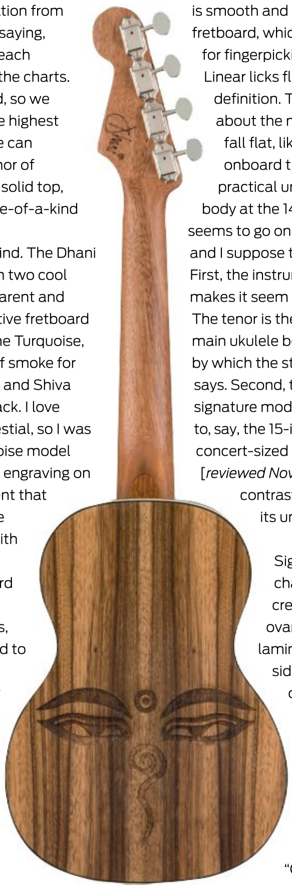
FENDER CONTINUES TO expand its line of unique ukes for the Artist Signature Series, and this time they got a little help from a fab friend. Dhani Harrison has worked with an expansive range of artists, from Wu-Tang to Jeff Lynne (who did a bit of Traveling with Harrison's Wilbury papa, who was himself in an influential band from Liverpool). Dhani Harrison has impressive ukulele chops, and, like a lot of guitar players, he finds the uke is a handy writing tool. He enlisted Fender to develop a signature model well-suited to the stage. Harrison drew inspiration from Kamaka Ukulele of Hawaii, saying, "No two are the same, and each handmade individual is off the charts. My model is mass produced, so we asked ourselves, What is the highest level of mass production we can achieve?" The result is a tenor of three-quarter depth, with a solid top, onboard electronics and one-of-a-kind aesthetics.

Well, actually two of a kind. The Dhani Harrison Signature comes in two cool hues: Sapphire Blue Transparent and Turquoise. Each has distinctive fretboard inlays — moon phases on the Turquoise, and what looks like a puff of smoke for the Sapphire's main inlay — and Shiva Yantra engravings on the back. I love turquoise and anything celestial, so I was about to request the Turquoise model when I noticed the mystical engraving on the Sapphire's back and went that way. To me, it resembles the distinctive Harrison brow, with wide eyes and bushy eyebrows, plus a cosmic third eye and a snake-like nose. Regarding the Shiva designs, Harrison remarks, "I just tried to think of something that I would want to look at every day for the rest of my life."

This ukulele has a full, bound neck that feels familiar in hands accustomed to acoustic guitars. The build is light but sturdy, with detailed craftsmanship. Playability is smooth and easy across the walnut fretboard, which offers plenty of space for fingerpicking and forming chords. Linear licks flow freely with strong note definition. The intonation is great until about the ninth fret, when it starts to fall flat, like a lot of ukes. Having an onboard tuner is handy. Playability is practical until the neck meets the body at the 14th fret. The fretboard seems to go on longer than one expects, and I suppose there are two reasons: First, the instrument's thinner body makes it seem smaller than it actually is. The tenor is the third largest of the four main ukulele body types. "It's the ukulele by which the standard is set," Harrison says. Second, the scale length on his signature model is 17 inches, compared to, say, the 15-inch scale of Fender's concert-sized Fullerton Jazzmaster [*reviewed November 2020*], which by contrast seems larger because of its unique body shape.

The Dhani Harrison Signature's particular characteristics combine to create a unique tone. Its solid ovangkol top, combined with laminated ovangkol back and sides at three-quarter depth on a tenor platform, add up to a sound that has the presence of a concert or soprano and the greater string energy of a tenor. This uke has plenty of pop, projection and volume. Harrison says, "Ovangkol is a fantastic





SPECIFICATIONS

Dhani Harrison Signature Ukulele
CONTACT fender.com
PRICE $279 street

NUT WIDTH 1.375", bone
NECK Nato
FRETBOARD Walnut, 17" scale
FRETS 19 total, 14 to the body
TUNERS Sealed nickel
BODY Solid ovangkol top, laminated ovangkol back and sides
BRIDGE Walnut
FACTORY STRINGS Fender Aquila Nylgut
WEIGHT 1.1 lbs (as tested)
BUILT China

KUDOS Looks fabulous, plays well, sounds particularly powerful amplified. Good gig bag
CONCERNS None





wood that was the nearest thing we could get to Hawaiian koa, which is too scarce for mass production." The tone is clear, with a quick attack and a rather sharp decay as well. This uke's dry acoustic tone is a little plinky compared to its more resonant amplified tone, which sounded surprisingly powerful, if not perfectly pristine, through an Acoustic Junior GO. Asked about its "upgraded electronics," Harrison says, "I just kept telling them to upgrade: make it better, smaller and better and lighter. We pushed the limits of how big it could be for the best acoustic sound, but not too thick like a lot of others that would just feedback onstage."

Players of all sorts and skill levels, and especially live performers, may be interested in the Dhani Harrison Signature. Those on the hunt for a warm, fuzzy-sounding acoustic uke to take to the beach might want to check out one of Fender's many full-bodied models, but the articulate acoustic-electric Dhani Harrison Signature, with its fabulous look, smooth playability and powerful amplified tone, earns an Editors' Pick for being super stageworthy at an accessible price.

AERO INSTRUMENT

Standard Strad ESS Pickups



TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER



WHILE THEY'VE BECOME some of the most-respected pickups for high-end basses, Aero Instrument's creations have remained a well-kept secret among six-stringers over their nearly three-decade run. If the likes of Darryl Jones and Juan Alderete are raving about the Aeros in their basses, you have to imagine they might do something special for guitars, and indeed they do. I first encountered Aero's guitar pickups while reviewing a Lentz Jr. Reserve S for *GP* in 2016, and the single-coils on that Strat-like guitar were one of the most versatile and overtly expressive sets I've ever played.

Founded in 1994, Aero pickups are made in Hilo, Hawaii, by proprietor Larry J. Pollack, who eschews the copyist road that so many winders take as they do their best to emulate vintage designs. Pollack instead strives to create pickups that simply make any instrument sound like its best possible self.

"Musicians don't like to talk about the pickup's function, except in magical terms," Pollack tells *GP*, "but the pickup is a transducer, a device that converts one form of signal into another, in this case converting the acoustic-mechanical vibration of the guitar into an electrical signal. The better it does that job, the better the pickup. The frequency response of the Aero pickup is broader than any instrument where they can be installed. The response is mostly flat, so the guitar sounds like an electric reproduction of the acoustic instrument."

Reviewed this issue is Aero's Standard Strad ESS Set, a drop-in replacement for Stratocaster guitars. The name is telling: It's "Strad" as in Stradivarius, and "ESS" for "exact string spacing," which embodies Aero's effort to ensure each pickup fits the intended guitar precisely, with no string drop-outs or dead spots. That endeavor requires the customer to submit string-to-string spacing measurements of the guitar at each pickup position (the test subject being a 2014 Fender Custom Shop 1954 Stratocaster Reissue, in this instance) and the overall fingerboard radius, to ensure a precise match.

Rather than giving pickup models names and relative specs to differentiate them, Aero uses the terms *type*, to denote construction and magnet details, and *level*, to signify output. This Standard set is RWRP. It comprises Type 1/Level 1 neck and middle pickups made with Alnico V magnets and wound with 42 AWG wire to readings of 6.76k-ohms and 7.42k-ohms respectively, and a Type 13/Level 2 bridge, which designates Alnico II magnets with 43 AWG wire and a reading of 10.30k-ohms. The neck and middle pickups have 9.5-inch radius-staggered pole pieces, and the bridge has flat poles.

Tested in the '54 Stratocaster Reissue through a tweed Deluxe–style 1x12 combo and a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cab, the Aero set proved to be very versatile and extremely euphonic. They sound very rich, as well as clear and chimey, and have plenty of S-style single-coil quack when you need it, as well as the ability to sound relatively thick and girthy without sacrificing the traditional vintage-Strat tonal tricks we all know and love. That in itself is quite an accomplishment. Also impressive is their propensity toward lot of harmonic sparkle and swirl without spiking into harshness, and the judicious dose of compression that eases the pick attack without mushing out.

Added together, these characteristics enable a broad sonic palette that is just as adept at clean, glassy, Knopfler-style soloing and spanky rhythm in the middle and in-between positions as it is at meaty faux-Tele twang on the bridge and throaty edge-of-breakup blues leads on the neck pickup. They're very well balanced string to string and position to position, and the RWRP provides handy noise-free performance in the two and four settings, although they aren't overly noisy for single-coils to begin with.

All in all, this is a noteworthy set of Strat replacement pickups that simply sounds delectable, musical and expressive, and effortlessly provides that coveted "stop thinking and play" experience that we all seek from our gear. For that, the Aero Standard Strad ESS set earns an Editors' Pick Award.

SPECIFICATIONS

Standard Strad ESS Pickups

CONTACT aeroinstrument.com

PRICE $445 for the set, direct

MAGNETS Staggered Alnico V poles neck and middle, flat Alnico II poles bridge

DC RESISTENCE 6.76 kΩ neck, 7.42 kΩ middle, 10.30 kΩ bridge

BUILT USA

KUDOS A beautiful-sounding and well-balanced set of Strat replacement pickups that retains vintage-like character while expanding versatility and range

CONCERNS None


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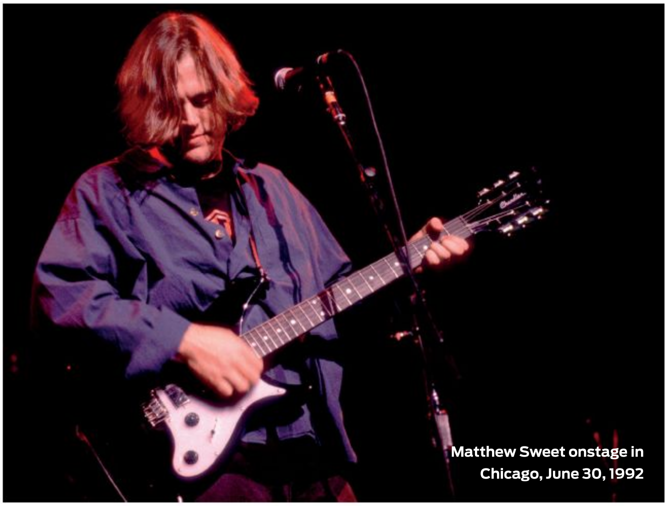


LEGACIES

How I Wrote... "Evangeline"

Matthew Sweet recalls his date with a timelessly enticing alt-rock classic.

BY JOE BOSSO


Matthew Sweet onstage in Chicago, June 30, 1992

PAUL NATKIN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

BY THE START of the 1990s, Matthew Sweet had released two critically acclaimed albums, 1986's *Inside* and 1989's *Earth*, but commercial success eluded him. That changed with the release of *Girlfriend*, issued in 1991, which established him as an alternative-rock star. The album cracked the upper half of *Billboard*'s Top 200, and its zippy title cut hit number 10 on the Mainstream Rock chart.

A veritable guitar-lover's paradise, *Girlfriend* features bravura six-string work courtesy of Sweet, Lloyd Cole and Ivan Julian, along with stunning solos performed by a pair of virtuoso aces: Richard Lloyd, formerly of Television, and the late Robert Quine, known for his work with Lou Reed, Brian Eno, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids. Among the album's many gems is the pop-rock masterpiece "Evangeline." Although never released as a single, the song became a calling card for the guitarist and a signature tune from his early career.

THE DROPPING OF THE D

At the time that he was writing songs for *Girlfriend*, Sweet's main guitars were Fender Jazzmasters and Strats, but he had been reading about drop-D tuning and wanted to try it. "It didn't work so well with whammy-bar guitars," he says, "but I found that my '56 goldtop reissue held the tuning perfectly, so I started playing around with it. I thought it sounded cool and was very unlike other things I was doing."

While playing in drop-D one day, a riff appeared, and Sweet started singing along to it. "It all happened pretty easily," he says. "In that way, it was one of those songs that came out of nowhere." Just as quickly, he began to incorporate lyrics inspired by the title character from the comic book *Evangeline*. "She was this scantily clad kind of babe who's a warrior on behalf of God, so there was this weird mix of religion, violence and sexuality," he explains. "I grew up Roman Catholic, but I was pretty much an atheist by the time I was writing the songs on *Girlfriend*. I sort of lashed out at God a little bit on the record. In 'Evangeline,' the guy is basically saying, 'Forget about God and come be with me.'"

Sweet wasn't too familiar with the work of Neil Young and Crazy Horse at the time, but when he sent a demo of songs for *Girlfriend*, including 'Evangeline,' to Russell Carter, his manager, the reaction was effusive. "He said, 'You sound like Crazy Horse!'" Sweet recalls him saying. "Russell then sent me cassettes of Crazy Horse, and I was like, 'Oh, my God. This is the best stuff ever.' It was all subconscious on my part. I wasn't necessarily going for that sound, but it was there."

> **"I THINK EVERYTHING RICHARD LLOYD PLAYED WAS A ONE-TAKE DEAL. THERE WAS NO REASON TO SECOND-GUESS IT'"**

SETTING LLOYD LOOSE

In the studio, Sweet and co-producer Fred Maher stayed true to the song's demo. "As opposed to 'Girlfriend,' which had a lot of stops and starts, 'Evangeline' was pretty straightforward in terms of arrangement," Sweet recalls. He played the main rhythm on his goldtop through a 20-watt Marshall. For the snaky lead lines that punctuate much of the track, he handed Richard Lloyd his Jazzmaster. "That's when things got a little funny," he says. "I wanted these repetitive melody lines exactly how they were on my demo, and Richard got frustrated. So I would play the parts myself on the Jazzmaster, and then I'd hand the guitar back to him and he would play the sections that sort of answered them. We went back and forth."

For the knockout solo, Sweet let Lloyd run free. "I remember for this solo, and the one Richard played on 'Divine Intervention,' I was just blown away," he says. "Everything he played was so forceful and spirited. Sometimes you do multiple takes of a solo, and you either pick one or do a comp and use tiny pieces of all of them. I think everything Richard played was a one-take deal. There was no reason to second-guess it."

Like many of the songs on *Girlfriend*, "Evangeline" is notable for its lack of reverb and the manner in which guitar parts are panned either hard left or right. "I was super into *Revolver*," Sweet recalls. "I remember listening to it on headphones as a kid and being knocked out by the way a guitar would burst out of one side of my head. Going hard right or left made the tracks really stand out."

"Evangeline" was so infectious, it probably didn't matter how it was mixed. The song remains a staple in Sweet's live set to this day. "Very infrequently we won't play it live," he notes, "and whenever that happens, people complain. It's a real fan favorite, and for a lot of people it sort of sums up the album and a particular time."




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